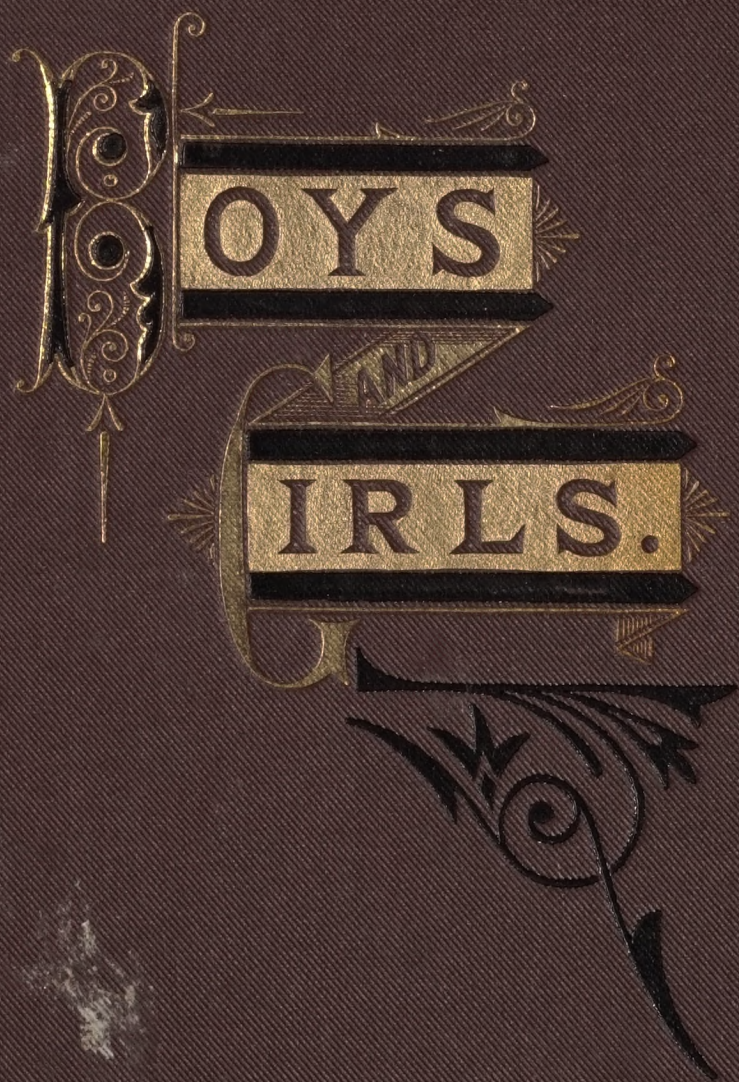


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Ben teaching the Christmas Party to Sing.

See page 18.



BEN AND BENTIE SERIES.

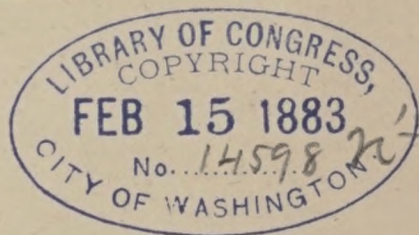
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# BOYS AND GIRLS.

By Mary H. Norris. ✓

35  
TWO ILLUSTRATIONS.

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# BOYS AND GIRLS.

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## I.

### THE CHRISTMAS PARTY.

IT was Christmas-eve. Snow covered the ground. The musical tinkle of sleigh-bells cut the frosty air. Houses, from basement to fourth story, were gay with lights. Music and bustle and the tread of thousands on the pavement banished stillness throughout the length and breadth of New York. Many who were on the street were happy; there were thousands who were sad. Countless hearts turned toward the Christ-child—some in thankfulness, some in curious wonder, others with pleadings that seemed importunate, so long had they arisen. But the rich and the poor, the good and the bad, the beloved and the friendless, felt that in the air and in the houses and on the streets was



a something that said : "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men."

There was a Christmas party at the Winthrops. It was a party that had not its counterpart in New York. Bentie and Aunt Winifred were a month in preparing for it; Mrs. Holmes was also. She had not gone out as a washerwoman in six weeks. Ben's letters toward the vacation expressed wonder in regard to the party, and Trot forgot all about medicine.

Down in the basement the cook was bustling back and forth; up in the main hall the porter was continually opening and shutting the great doors. Ascending the broad, sloping stairs, and softly entering the lofty chambers, in a blaze of light and flowers and beauty, were little children. They every one moved slowly. Some clung to the balusters or to a helping hand, or grasped crutches; a few were carried immediately into the drawing-room and divested of their wraps.

Bentie was every-where in a minute. The failure in cooking a dinner for her father had been the indirect cause of the party. In the latter part of November she went to Aunt Winifred and said : "I am a regular ignoramus,



and I wish you would give me housekeeping lessons on Saturdays until I can take complete charge of papa's house."

Busy as she was with her studies, she yet threw herself with an abandonment and vigor into her kitchen life, which added much to her domestic wisdom. These new experiences over cooking and sweeping, arranging and buying, were not merely so many bare facts learned; they afforded Aunt Winifred a fine opportunity to give Bentie a multitude of lessons in economy, buying, and the judging of the actual value of articles. As Bentie saw herself becoming skilled, and viewed with admiration the cakes and pies, the rolls and sauces, the meats and vegetables, her own hands had prepared, she wondered whether there were not some other people in the world besides her father to whom they would taste just as good. She wondered whether for Christmas-eve she could not take some of her goodies and give, as she expressed it, "a regular New Testament party." The more she thought of it the more possible it became.

At length, when she ventured to speak of it to her father, Mr. Winthrop gave her full liberty as to money to make as many happy



with her bounties as the capacity of his house would allow. Finding herself in a dilemma as to where and how she should seek just the persons she wanted at her party, she adroitly discovered how much a month Mrs. Holmes earned by washing, and then proposed that George's mother should become a kind of city missionary at that sum, till Christmas, in going with her and showing her where deserving poor children lived.

"And, Mrs. Holmes," said Bentie, "I wish to invite, as far as possible, those who are not only poor, but also afflicted with some bodily infirmity; those who seldom get out of doors, and of whom few people think. I should like to have an interesting party, and yet one made up of uninteresting children. The well and the hearty, even though they may suffer now, will be able, by and by, to help themselves, you know. Those who will come on Christmas-eve will probably be the poor whom we shall always have with us."

When Christmas-eve came the sleighs had gone back and forth, in lanes and narrow streets and filthy alleys, covered for a little while, thank God, by the purifying snow, until a host of afflicted little ones, full of awe and a



keen, childish curiosity over their beautiful surroundings, were gathered in the Winthrop mansion.

Ben was home from college. He had grown even taller. His reserve had partially worn away. There was in his manner, one could not say more manliness, but more dignity and self-confidence, a self-confidence quite removed, however, from conceit. During his absence he had applied himself so closely to work and had seen so little of any life that breathed the exquisite culture and beautiful spirit of his own home, that, on his return, he felt, for the first time in his experience, like breaking all the barriers of reserve which had heretofore shut him out from the majority of people. He entered with the zest of an exile into every thing that was homelike, domestic, and generous. His three months of self-discipline and self-dependence had also made broader the way upon which he had just entered at the close of our second volume. Notwithstanding an occasional failure, he had, on the whole, maintained among his fellow-students a bold, Christian standing, and had come home with his hopes so settled, his love to God so assured, that the "mystery of godli-



ness" was becoming more and more plain and beautiful.

Bentie had joined Ben and George Holmes. She was so engaged in making the little waifs who filled the parlors laugh and play, that she came for only a few words at a time. No one could look at the boys—respectful, manly, loving admiration shining in their faces for the simple, unaffected girl who had asked them to join her in forming games—without feeling that Bentie was exercising a strong molding influence, stronger than though it were loud, boisterous, and commanding. Boys much rougher than either George or Ben had ever been would have done almost any thing rather than incur the displeasure of a girl so finely womanly and so delicate in all polite attentions as Bentie.

So Ben and George, though wondering what they should do, advanced into the midst of the curious little ones, and in five minutes each was busy in his own characteristic manner.

George had a wonderful gift for telling stories. Presently, twenty or thirty children, lame, blind, crippled in some way, were listening breathlessly and with tears to the



stranger. Beautiful things he related, not only with his tongue, but with those great, solemn brown eyes of his, which, now that friends were increasing and work had brought manly independence, were sparkling and very attractive.

"Who is the smallest one among you?" asked George.

"Me!" and a chubby hand was quickly raised and a large pair of blue eyes surveyed the semicircular group with critical gravity.

George glanced at the flaxen-haired little girl, then at her maimed foot hanging limp and helpless below her faded dress, and thought to himself: "Here is a little sufferer to whom I must bring kindness home before I can impress her with any thing pathetic in the history of others." So he left his quondam throne and presently returned with a soft and very low chair, into which he gently lifted the child.

"This is nice," she said softly, as she sank into the warm, broad seat, and folded her hands in her lap with a deal of satisfaction.

"At my house the smallest allers gets the best, if there is any best," said a thin boy with a hungry expression, and who was



perched uncomfortably on a high reception-chair.

The blue eyes turned, and, in accordance with George's opinion of their owner, said what her tongue did shortly: "The big ones had ought to give up to the little ones;" then, after a pause: "'Taint so bad to be lame. I gets more to eat and more to wear than my brothers and sisters."

"Are you happier in having more than they?" asked George.

"I don't know. 'Taint no use to be cold and hungry when you can be warm and full."

The questions having now aroused the interest of all, George, with true skill, introduced his story.

"Abbie," to the owner of the blue eyes, "suppose the chair you sit in were yours?"

Involuntarily the short fat fingers grasped the arms with an air of ownership.

"And suppose these large, beautiful rooms and all the stores in New York that are to-night so full of candies, and handsome dolls, and rich silks, and chairs like the one you are in, and every thing, indeed, that can make little hearts happy and hungry stomachs full, belonged to your father. And suppose your



poor foot were straight and strong, and that all of these dear children, who are blind or deaf or sick in some way, were as beautiful—as beautiful as Miss Bentie,” added George, as the young hostess passed the attentive group. “Suppose, too, that the handsome, healthy children did just as you wished to have them do, and that you could have what you wanted, and be where you wished to be, and that every one who knew you loved you better than any one else. Now, suppose that your father shared all of his great possessions with you. After awhile some one to whom he had been very kind and to whom he had given a great many presents disobeyed his commands. He decided to send the naughty man and all of his family away from a fine house which he had given them, because he had told the man that, if he were naughty, he should be severely punished; would you feel sorry for the man?”

“I guess I would. And I would give him some of my things. Why, I would not know what to do with so much, any way.”

“Suppose your father did not think it best for you to give him presents, what would you do then?”



"I would ask him not to punish the man."

"And if he said he must?"

The little girl looked puzzled, and the large boy on the reception-chair said:

"I once took a whipping to save my brother 'cause he was sick and kinder scrawny. But I tell you, it took all the grit I had. Father puts it on hard. Now, do you mean to say—" and Job looked curiously at George.

"I don't like to be punished if I haint done nothing bad," said Abbie quickly. "The man had ought to have minded."

"He ought, but, you see, he didn't."

"Well, I believe," said Job, "if it came to the pinch, I might take the punishment; but, if he didn't feel real grateful for what I did, I'd tell my father to give it to him then, thick and heavy."

"Shall I tell you what some one did whose Father found it necessary to inflict a severe punishment on one who had disobeyed him? He went to his Father and said, 'I will bear the severest suffering that can be inflicted on me in order that this man may some day have a beautiful home again. The greatest sorrow I could experience would be to leave you and go to live with this man and teach him better.'"



“That, I take it, was too much of a good thing—offering more than I could,” interrupted Job.

“It is the truth,” said George. “He did do just this.”

Abbie worked a little uncomfortably in her chair, but did not take her eyes from his face.

“He spent thirty-three years in teaching the disobedient man, and the other wicked people of the country to which he had gone, to do better. He lived in the same manner as the poorest of them did. The only reward he received was that some of them tried to kill him. They did at length seize him and nail him on a cross, where he hung till he died.”

“Why, you are telling about Jesus Christ,” said Job, softly. “It seems kinder new, though.”

“While agonizing on the cross,” George continued, “he lifted up his voice to his Father and said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’”

Abbie asked so many questions, that George simplified the whole Bible story of Christ’s life. He showed the royal Herod terrified at the birth of the divine King, and made Job’s eyes moisten over the lamentations of the mothers.



He pictured the child Jesus reproving the priests in the temple. He then related, with deep reverence, the wonderful cures the child when grown had effected. Afterward, as only a sympathetic person can, he portrayed the sweet love and forgiving spirit our gentle Lord is desirous of implanting in children's souls. George finally contrasted the Saviour's dying love with the hatred of the Jews and the cruelty of the Romans. Not one little child failed to understand the spirit of the great theme. Each returned to its plain, dull home with a picture in its heart of that country where there are many mansions, and where all who reach it will be housed in a mansion forever and forever.

Ben, meanwhile, had gathered around him a half dozen, and, to every one's surprise, successfully improvised an amateur singing-school. He played "Yankee Doodle" on the violin, and six lustier pairs of lungs and six happier singers than his scholars it would have been difficult to find.\* He played "Shoo Fly" and all of the street songs that were decent and that he knew they could sing, and at length, although he had played till his arms ached, he

\* See Frontispiece.



asked them to learn a song that he liked, he said, and taught them the first two stanzas of "Children of the heavenly King." Explaining it by a short abstract from "Pilgrim's Progress," of Christiana and her children setting out to meet Christian, and telling them that they might also become just such children, he roused their zeal and so inspired them with the reality of life's journey that they fairly made the rooms echo with the line, "As we journey let us sing."

The practice was brought to a happy conclusion by the announcement of supper. A real dinner it was, for there, before the astonished eyes of many who had never sat down to turkey before, that edible fowl was planted at frequent intervals the length of the tables. There were, besides, vegetables cooked after a more approved recipe than any in Bentie's books. There were baskets of golden oranges and ruddy apples, grapes, luscious, round and fragrant, and huge pyramids of candy containing enough to fill every little pocket.

Many a wee one sat in its chair, too stupefied, for the time being, to begin the repast to which it did not however fail, after a while, to do ample justice.



The glory of the evening was reserved, however, till after the meal. Then, preparatory to sending the children home, a Christmas-tree was uncovered, a great, branching one, hung with the most curious mixture that ever Christmas-tree presented. There were suits of clothes from whose sleeves protruded such mottoes as, "Where is Johnny Green? I belong to him." "I wish Billy Blake would try me on and see whether I fit." "O, Susie Buckle, wont you take me home with you to-night?"

In addition to a present that had been carefully selected with reference to the needs of each child, there was for every one a package of cake that Bentie had herself baked for the occasion. When each little one had its present safely folded in its arms, Mr. Winthrop said:

"Now, my children, you must remember that you would not have come here to-night and have received these gifts unless the Christ, of whom George has told you, had put it into our hearts to bring you hither; and, before you go, I want you all to kneel with me and repeat the prayer that Christ said we were to pray."

Sentence by sentence the numerous childish



voices repeated: "Our Father, who art in heaven," and then, the sleighs being in readiness, the little waifs were sent away not only with a Christmas in their hands, but in their hearts.

When the last load had departed, and Bentine with her friends had gathered around the library grate, Mr. Winthrop said:

"I have a notion, Bentine, to make the experiment of the evening something more permanent. Every thing, however, depends on Mrs. Holmes."

The latter looked up in surprise, but said heartily: "I feel more than willing to do any thing in my power."

Both she and George regarded Bentine and her father as the author for them of a new and happy existence.

"You will have to become a professional woman, a Lady Bountiful, a kind of Saint Elizabeth," said Mr. Winthrop, smiling. "Then, too, you will have to become a school teacher, a nurse, a police force, and a steward."

Every body was interested, and Bentine, putting her arms around her father's neck and threatening to choke him if he did not cease



such mystifying, made believe shake the information from his mouth.

"Well," said Mr. Winthrop sententiously and making a long pause.

"Well," echoed Bentie imploringly.

"It seemed almost cruel to me, while those little ones were gathered here to-night, to afford them this one glimpse of happy, healthful human existence, and then not to follow it up by lessons and helps to something better than they meet with in their daily life. So I have thought while I have been sitting here that I could devote a room, in a building I have on one of the business avenues, to Mrs. Holmes, provided she would engage to keep it filled with from forty to fifty cripples, and teach them how to employ their hearts, their heads, and their hands. Thus we should have all to ourselves a quiet mission, a receptacle for good deeds that might otherwise remain unperformed, and a constant call upon our sympathies and affections. By and by, perhaps, we should reach the parents. If we reform or even permanently benefit fifty homes, it will be one sheaf to present to the Master when he questions us about our harvest."

Mrs. Holmes's eyes filled with tears over this



providential and totally unlooked-for change in her prospects, and George, whose heart had been so often wrung because of the severe manual labor his mother had been obliged to perform, spoke his pleasure impulsively and enthusiastically.

Bentie's gray eyes lighted up, as she said: "I begin to see, papa, O so plainly, what you mean by life-problems. Why, one is meeting them all the time; and they are not so difficult to solve, are they, if you take them one by one?"


Trot, who had by no means failed to manifest her usual energy and dignity, looked, just at the moment, profoundly thoughtful. Then, regarding Mrs. Holmes earnestly, she said: "If you should ever need a physician in your school, and I am old enough and wise enough, will you employ me?"

Trot's proposal had so many wise provisions that Mrs. Holmes immediately promised, and then, as it was already late, the Holmeses and the Stantons departed, leaving Bentie, her father, and Aunt Winifred alone, to watch by moonlight the midnight dawning of Christmas.



## II.

## THE TWO DECISIONS.

RS. HOLMES'S scholars were of various ages. Some had high seats, some low, and others chairs that seemed the outgrowth of their bodily constitution. The school-room faced front. It had two windows. When they were open, with the buzzing of the girls and boys' voices mingled the jingle of the bells of the horse-cars, and the roar and murmur of the crowded thoroughfare. But, as the room was high up, the constancy of the noise outside only seemed to heighten the hurry of the work inside. This school-room was a pleasant place to all; to Abbie and Job it was a paradise.

Ever since the time of George's talk, Abbie had thought much on the great goodness of Christ in coming into this world. In many ways she had been endeavoring to learn that, although she was lame and often hungry, yet a hard seat could become soft and an



empty stomach less empty if, by doing without, she made some one else more comfortable. Her eyes were not only blue now, but they shed a softer, gentler light.

Job found it difficult to understand that once in a while the "biggest" and the "oldest" were first served. It was always with a wondering surprise that he accepted even the commonest attention from Mrs. Holmes. Sometimes, when Miss Bentie made her appearance in the little school-room and, bending over him, would solve a problem for him or teach him the pronunciation of long words, his delight and gratitude knew no bounds.

"It 'pears to me," he said one day, "as if I were in another world. I do believe, Mrs. Holmes, that the wicked one himself would find it very hard to show his nature in this room."

After this speech he quietly settled down to his spelling, pounding out each word with the one finger left on his right hand; he had lost the others in a saw-mill. For his support he sold the morning papers. He spent the afternoon and sometimes half the evening over his books. The school-room was open as late as the most studious desired, and the regular



duties concluded so early that none became over tired.

Never before had Job known what it was to sit down beside a shaded lamp to study and read. Such a luxury was it that, when the winter nights were at their longest, he remained lost in his books till nine or ten o'clock. Then, buttoning up his patched and weather-worn overcoat about his sturdy little chin, with a good-night to Mrs. Holmes that was invariably accompanied by a look of loving admiration, he would disappear into the darkness.

Now Bentie found this school one of her life-problems. How they were accumulating! Her career as a student was one; her care for her papa's house made two; her various devices for the welfare of Mrs. Holmes's pupils, three; and the trying to discover in just what final good these opportunities for usefulness would result, four. Then for a fifth were all of the other questions that arose from day to day. How full and grand were her efforts to draw near to Christ in holy living becoming! She felt that her slightest attempt was dignified, and that each day, each hour, and each effort might be filled with a glory that came from above. Her faithful watching and work-



ing began to develop in her a gentle self-repose and confidence that she had too often lacked in critical moments. With what a burst of thankfulness she rushed into Aunt Winifred's arms at the close of the school-year to relate to her the results of her final examination preparatory to college.

"Auntie, I could no more have done it a year ago! Why, when Ben's class were undergoing their last ordeal in a public school, I looked upon them as prodigies. I see now that it is the training that does it. A girl cannot, any more than a boy, sail in deep water unless she paddles her boat through the shallows first. There was I, studying rhetoric and literature at Madame Riviere's school, and not understanding some of the simplest rules of grammar. This year I have risen step by step, studying nothing beyond, or only what was a little beyond, my comprehension. And, auntie, I have grown. I am not a bit afraid that I shall fail to pass my preparatory examination at college. If there is a battle in United States history whose beginning and end I cannot recite, a cape from the North Pole to the South whose name is not at my tongue's end, or an ordinary problem in arith-



metic that I am unable to solve, I am very much mistaken. I wish it were time now for me to start off. I feel so anxious to settle down to the efforts of the next five years."

"A long summer of country life is what you need just now. Has your father told you of what we and the Stantons propose doing in a fortnight?"

"Something delightful, I know, if it is connected with the Stantons. Ben will be home from college, too. What is it?"

"About a fortnight before the camp-meeting opens we are going to Green Lake to rusticate. You have heard your father tell, I am sure, of the fine times he had there in shooting and fishing."

"Green Lake! Splendid!"

"Splendid, Bentie?" asked her aunt, reprovingly.

"Yes, auntie, splendid. Splendid means shining, and I am sure, if we go to Green Lake, we shall have a shining, good time; now sha'n't we?"

Bentie threw her two arms about Aunt Winifred's neck, and, laying her cheek against the chiding mouth, continued, "Such quantities of water-lilies as I shall gather, and mosses



and ferns! And, auntie, let us get up some morning ever so early and go wading. O, I can almost feel the cool, soft water around my feet now. I'd like to be a fish or a hobgoblin, 'in shape no bigger than an agate-stone!' No, I would be a Queen Mab, and then what antics I would perform with you all. I'd be in the water one minute, pulling your boat to the very center of the largest fish-party in the lake; or I would buzz about papa's eyes, in the form of a gnat, until he put by his reading or smoking for a good long talk with his daughter. I would do something every minute of the time to extract the very best out of you all. Such a summer and such good times! Ben and I can have no end of fun and improvement in collecting specimens. Do you suppose, auntie, that Ben will act college-fied when he comes home this time? He wasn't a bit so last winter, and yet, as Bridget told me, 'Wasn't he the perfect pattern of a gentleman?' just like a boy, you know, only a great deal nicer. I was thinking this morning of the wisdom of God in making us boys and girls. There are ways about Ben that I like ever so much, and that I haven't and couldn't have if I tried. They are a constant



surprise to me. And then, you know, it is I who made Ben first like girls. He says that since he has known me he has come to believe that they all have common-sense, if boys could only learn to find it out. How soon do we go? Let's see, it is now the first of July. Why, auntie, only a week before we shall be off to the mountains. Hurrah!"

Bentie danced around the room, then, subsiding for a few minutes, presently rose to get her "odds and ends" together. "We are not to be the least bit fashionable, are we, auntie?"

"Not the very least bit: water-proofs, heavy boots, linen dresses, you can get ready in an hour!"

"But the books! Ben likes to read aloud. There are all of those new poems. There, I have an idea; I am going to pack up some re-torts and other chemical apparatus, and we can construct a laboratory in the woods and have some grand experiments. If Ben should have forgotten old times he will have to come back to them when he sees all of my fixings."

Ben came home from college.

"He seems rather quiet, but then I always



did predict that he would grow up dignified," thought Bentie.

The box for their mutual chemical edification, and which she had taken great pains to prepare, was safely stowed away in her trunk, somewhat at the risk, however, of the compactly folded linens and prints.

Green Lake, a picturesque and peculiar body of water situated on one of the numerous mountains that diversify the northern sections of New Jersey, had to be approached through an exceedingly rough, wild country. The stout conveyance into which our friends were crowded careened over stones and ruts, and up and down great hills to such an extent that the laughing and general merriment increased until old and young were in a frolicsome gale.

As the driver paused at the foot of a steep road running diagonally up the side of a singularly even and unbroken range, on whose summit was Green Lake, Ben and Bentie sprang from the wagon, the latter desirous to equip herself at once with piscatorial apparatus. The walk was a long and shady one. Falling behind the carry-all, waiting, indeed, until it was out of sight, they chattered, busy as magpies,



over the thousand-and-one events with which for each the past year had been crowded. Ben had many college stories to relate, and, assured that Bentie would understand, with the same freedom as of old he entered into the particulars of his standing in this class, how he had worked in that, and how the fellows rated him.

It was a chapter of intense interest to her, for, although her domestic accomplishments had opened up a new life, they had not interfered in the least with her steady progress in school. The regular discipline, the few daily studies thoroughly mastered, had seemed to rub from our earnest, striving friend the childish instability she had before manifested. But, in addition to regular study and continual advancement, pictures and reports of a college whose curriculum was in substance identical with the one which Ben attended, had roused every dormant energy of her nature. Here, on the cool and shady mountain, reaching up above their heads like the tritely familiar hill of science, Bentie felt that she too must give utterance to her aspirations. So, when Ben had actually paused to take breath, looking up, she said :



"I have fully decided to go to college in the autumn."

"Where?" asked Ben eagerly.

"To Simpson," and Bentie looked gravely at Ben to weigh the effect of her announcement.

"Well, that is the place for you," replied Ben sententiously. "But, are you fitted to enter?"

"I shall have to go as preparatory. There is a two years' course preparatory to the college course. I feel quite sure that I can enter as high as the second year, though. They say that the 'preps' are snubbed unmercifully by the collegiates."

"Well," said Ben again, after a pause, "a college is a college. If things were made too easy for the 'preps,' perhaps, like so many institutions for women that have started with high-sounding catalogues, this college of your choice would degenerate into nothing more or less than a seminary. I believe Simpson College is thorough and does college work, and that is saying a good deal for a boy."

"It is not saying any more than you ought, if it is the truth," replied Bentie.



"Will you stay to graduate?" asked Ben, discreetly overlooking her retort.

"Of course, I have learned to believe in finishing what I undertake. I would not leave the grammar school if I could not go over the same ground at college and at the same time reach a higher grade. You haven't changed your mind as to how and what girls should study, have you, Ben?"

"Not a bit of it. The more a girl knows the better company she is, to say the least; and if a little knowledge makes a boy conceited while much renders him humble, I do not see why the proportions would not have the same effect upon a girl. No, Bentie, I should really be disappointed in you if you did not amount to more than common girls."

"Ben, I wish to be just a common girl and nothing else; at least, I shall be satisfied with being a common girl. I think very many girls now-a-days, according to Aunt Winifred, are uncommon know-nothings. I wish to become thoroughly competent to manage a house; I have almost learned, Ben. I also wish to have my mind so disciplined that, one of these days, I shall be able to grasp with my



intellect the weightiest thoughts of the profoundest scholars."

"You are also to be my chemist, you must remember," said Ben.

"O, yes, that is understood," replied Bentie quickly, but, at the same time, feeling a thrill of delight because Ben had not, after all, forgotten. The two then took quite a review in a study which had fallen out of the line of each the preceding year.

Meanwhile they had reached the summit of the mountain. After a hearty country dinner, served to them in simple farmers' style, the two started with the others to the lake, but separated from them again on finding a small, light boat unoccupied.

Ben was an excellent oarsman. When he had propelled Bentie a mile out into the lake, under the shadow of a high rock formation, that rose precipitously and reached almost the entire length of the northern side of the sheet of water, they prepared their fishing-tackle. Each remained perfectly silent, intent on the depths below, which were vividly green and transparent.

For a long time the fish would not bite. But at length, to Bentie's joy, she raised a



dripping, shining pickerel, which Ben detached and placed in the bottom of the boat. Her pickerel began their good fortune, for in less than an hour their basket was full of fishes of various sizes and motley coloring. Then they rowed to the farther end of the lake, where water-lilies grew in abundance.

Bentie leaned over the side of the boat, floating her hand through the water, and feeling that life was very smooth and very happy on the whole. It was so delightful to pull up the long, sinuous stems crowned each one with a starry flower showing through bursting green leaves milky white petals and dimly, far within, golden centers. Over the water were the long branches of willows and birches; rank and green and fragrant shrubs grew close together in the soft, black earth, and formed a home for myriad birds singing and hopping and cooing as Bentie and Ben sat talking and rocking in the water-lily bed.

"Ben," said Bentie, "there is one point about which I wish to speak to you, and that is Church membership. Papa persuaded me not to unite with the Church until I had had time to fully decide whether I could be a whole-



hearted Methodist. Half-way members did more harm than good."

"What have you decided?" asked Ben, while he washed his hand back and forth through the water.

"I have decided to join the Church; and I can do it, Ben, with my heart and with my mind. I can make a full, hearty promise to all the questions put to those desiring membership. I have wanted several times to ask you whether you could not join at the same time."

"I could assent to all the questions put, so far as regards belief," he answered, "but for two reasons I do not care to make a public profession. First, if I did, I do not believe I would have as much actual influence with a certain set of boys in college; and, secondly, I do not care to bind myself to promises such as Church members make. If I assumed those vows, I should want to live up to them, and, Bentie, I do not meet with more than one in a hundred who does. If it is sinful to keep out of the Church, it is still more so to bring discredit upon the Church."

"I thought you were more brave, Ben," said Bentie, in a tone of gentle reproach. "Can



you not live, at least ought you not to try to live, up to principle, irrespective of what others do? It is the effort and not the actual deed, in God's sight, you know."

"It is not a question of bravery or cowardice with me," said Ben, coloring. "It is common sense. There is human nature in every one of us. I know that I have my full share. Can I do what hundreds of others have failed to do? I do not mean to work the less; I only mean not to put myself up for inspection. Besides, you do not know how unbearable I find these good people who are always giving advice which they never follow themselves. They abound in the Church."

"Of course," replied Bentie; "but there is another sort of Christianity that also abounds. You need not follow all the advice given you. As well, Ben, as you are able to help yourself, you would, I believe, find a great assistance in the strength of united forces. Your chemistry teaches you sufficient about that. I think that, as loving Christ above every thing in heaven or earth, you should not question a moment whether you may for any length of time separate your influence from the recognized body of our Lord's fol-



lowers. Duty seems to me very plain as regards this point. A few united can accomplish, either in influence or work, what one person could never do. Please join the Church when I do, Ben."

Ben rocked the boat back and forth, looking so irresolute that Bentie was encouraged to renew her entreaties. At length, looking up with tears in his eyes, he said:

"You are right, and I am wrong, Bentie. We *will* join the Church together."

She felt very thankful and happy; and Ben, now that he had really decided to do what his conscience had long ago urged as his duty, felt as if a great weight had been lifted from his mind.

Meanwhile, on the day that Ben and Bentie were settling a question of duty made easier by years of generous and Christian home-culture and a wise provision for their necessities, as well as many of their mere fancies, George Holmes was driving merchandise through parched and dusty streets. The July sun shed hot, scorching rays, burning the pavements, reddening the faces of pedestrians, and making man and beast perspire profusely. All the morning, and half-way through the



afternoon, George had tugged and lifted and driven; now, when the last breath of air had died away, and that intense heat which reigns between two and four o'clock seemed too hot to endure, he reached the warehouse just in time to confront a new arrival of boxes and bales. His head was throbbing; his hands were aching. But, as long as he had worked for Mr. Winthrop, his whole soul bent on success, he had never once wavered, never once complained, so that, young as he was, his employer placed implicit confidence in his integrity and willingness.

As George drove up, Mr. Winthrop, who was to join his family on the morrow, looked with admiration on the boy's fine, determined face, his manly, sensitive mouth, and wished he were his son.

"I wish the goods had stayed out of town for a day for your sake, George," he said, good-naturedly, as, in his shirt sleeves and with his hat on the back of his head, George proceeded to load.

"The most of the day is over," replied the boy, cheered by Mr. Winthrop's tones as much as by his words. But he wondered whether the hot night would leave him strength to



pursue studies which he had continued with unremitting diligence during the evenings after his day's work was done.

It was up-hill work; but in the fall he had set his teeth together and vowed that, by some means or other, he would keep pace with Ben. When the summer vacation came, comparing notes with the latter, he found himself a month behind. So there was nothing to do but to devote his July evenings to work. "All of August would be free," he told his mother, when she expostulated with him. Day and night work together imparted to his eyes a restless brightness and lines prematurely grave to his young face. "Death or victory," was the desperate motto he had taken to shape his career. To one looking at him on these sultry evenings as he sat absorbed in study, it might well have been a question as to which side the mastery would eventually belong.

As Mr. Winthrop watched the boy's slight but wiry frame quiver under the heavy boxes, a fatherly impulse seized him. Hurriedly dropping his linen coat, before George could remonstrate, he was at the boy's side, assisting him in loading his wagon. It was



a new sight to many of the clerks to see their employer take hold of the work in that style, and for George it was the prelude to a conversation that sent him home with such a throbbing heart and brain that, do all he could, Greek and Latin mingled together so confusedly in his thoughts that he was obliged to lay his books aside. But he slept a sound, dreamless sleep, and awoke with such an exultant, proud, victorious feeling that labor and success, as its result, seemed more than possible.

After his wagon had been loaded and he had returned, according to the order, upon the delivery of the goods, he went to Mr. Winthrop's office, where he found his employer awaiting him with something of the eagerness of an impatient father.

"George," said Mr. Winthrop, "it is speculators who nowadays make money, is it not?"

"A great many of them do," replied the boy wonderingly.

"If I should enter into a speculation, would you help me?" asked his employer with sparkling eyes.

George looked at him for an instant, and, feeling the genial cordiality breathing from



every feature of Mr. Winthrop's countenance, replied:

"If there is money in it, sir."

"I think there is; in fact, I believe there is a fortune in it for you. What do you think of that?"

"What do I think of that?" asked George breathlessly; "I think I would go to college."

Mr. Winthrop laughed out and, patting George on the shoulder, replied: "You have named the nucleus of the fortune I intend you shall have. Listen to my speculation. I have no sons of my own, as you know, and so the next best thing for me to do is to take an honest pleasure in the sons, especially the talented sons, of other people."

George flushed rosy at this unexpected compliment.

"I have a few hundred dollars lying idle," continued Bentie's father, "and for several weeks I have been looking for a trustworthy person to whom to lend them. Suppose you borrow them of me for an indefinite term of years, at six per cent. interest, and go through college. How long would it take you?"

"Three years, sir," replied George, his heart almost choking him as the possibility of just



such a future as he had longed for burst upon his vision. "Only three years, sir, for I have almost kept up with Ben Stanton's first year, by private study. But the risks, sir."

"O, there are risks in every great speculation. My share of the risk is in seeing whether you come out with flying colors; your share is in dying before you accomplish your purpose, and being, in consequence, unable to cancel the debt. Do you agree?"

"I believe I do, sir," replied George, "but I think I will go home first and talk things over with mother. We are all in all to each other, you know, Mr. Winthrop."

"God bless you for remembering your mother!" and Mr. Winthrop's eyes moistened.

George's home is somewhat different from the attic to which we first presented our readers. What with his wages and his mother's salary as teacher of the novel but successful school Mr. Winthrop originated, they have been enabled to rent a flat in a modest but clean neighborhood, and to have plenty of good air and water.

To see Mrs. Holmes now, at the expiration of the first school year, one would hardly be-



lieve her to be the same woman. Her hair is, indeed, snowy white, but her face, which is by no means old, has such a happy, contented expression—the lines have become so reduced through an abundance of sleep, rest, and wholesome food—that she really appears ten years younger. She sits by her third-story window looking toward the distant corner around which George always makes his first appearance. To-night, as he draws nearer and nearer, her face lights into the proudest, happiest smile, and the memory of the bitter, bitter past seems like a dream before the future of her manly son.

What has happened, however, to take all of the premature solemnity from her boy's face, and cause him to swing his hat toward her window in such a wild, happy way? She rises from her chair, goes out into the hall, cannot wait for him to mount the three flights of stairs, and so meets him half way. He puts his arm around her waist and they climb the stairs together. So soon as they are in their own little dining room she clasps her hands around George's neck and says, "Do tell me what it is, my son."

George drew a more graphic picture than we



can hope to do of his interview with Mr. Winthrop, and made his mother laugh till the tears ran down her cheeks, over the novel terms of the speculation, and concluded with, "Can you spare me, mother, and shall I go?"

"Go? a hundred times go! I begin to see an answer to my years of prayer. Go, if it is only for a year. You will yet wipe away the stain your father left upon your infancy, and prove the fact that every American boy makes his own birthright."



## III.

## BENTIE'S COLLEGE.

SEPTEMBER has come once more; that spicy, changeful month that brings to New York State almost as many showers as does April. There are two of our friends in whom even the first day awakens a thrill and anticipation, for this month begins their college career. So much has been said about the institution whither George followed Ben, that we will accompany Bentie, as she "goes up," as college boys say, to pass her examinations.

Would you like a picture of Bentie, as she appears now? And by and by another, when we are invited to see her graduate? for our Bentie is going to graduate.

She is very much like every other girl, and yet she is so much like herself that I do not suppose you would think of paying her that common compliment we all receive, of bearing "such a striking resemblance to my friend so and so."



Most healthy girls are plump. In that respect Bentie is like other girls; and yet she has a curious way of looking so small that many call her slender; she is round and compact—that is all. She is also tall, only, you do not know that she is, until you come to stand beside her; another curious point, you will say. It is because she is symmetrical. Then she is like an aspen leaf as regards motion—here when you think she is there, and there when you think she is here. She has her gray eyes still, of course; but what I meant to say is, her gray eyes have their baby expression. They are not hard, wise, bold eyes; but, whether it is their shape, or their lashes, or their expression, you only see enough of them at a time to make you wish to see more. What you do see (at least, so her eyes affect me) makes you think of those shady vistas in pine woods carpeted with silver-gray moss through which the mellow sunshine strikes athwart. I think, any way, don't you? that one sort of gray eyes is like a rainbow; it seems to contain every color, and changes every instant, so that if one looks away a moment, he seems to have lost something. Bentie has a great deal of color, too; it mot-



bles her hands and her arms so that they are oftentimes pink and white ; it creeps along her cheeks as far as her ears, and plays tag around her chin and up to the roots of her hair, and, in short, comes and goes, as she does herself, in the most unexpected places and at the most unexpected times ; but, like herself, it is so quiet, that you wonder whether she ever makes any noise. She has two rows of shining, even teeth, all her own, and she has a mass of chestnut hair that is almost red at times ; it would be quite, if some people, and they tell the truth, did not call it golden hair also. And she has—how shocking ! some of you will say—but she really has large hands and feet. But if you once felt the touch of Bentie's hand, if you notice hand-touches at all, you would say she had a beautiful hand. It is a soft, firm, gentle hand ; when she takes yours you not only feel her finger-tips, but you feel her whole hand ; and, when she picks up a book, or a pie, or a broom, that large, white, firm hand looks as though it could carry the book, the pie, or the broom. She wears fours in boots—yes, she does ; but she has a high instep, so high and so arched that, as old nurses say, in telling whether one is of



aristocratic birth, the water will run under it without wetting it; and Bentie is of aristocratic birth, for, like every American girl, she was born a queen. Perhaps she might squeeze her foot into "threes," the orthodox number; but she has a horror of bent toes and a righteous fear of those little, hard, yellow spots—do you know what I mean?—that sometimes appear on the feet of girls who try to compress the healthy flesh, muscles and bones, which ought to carry them majestically through the world.

Do you believe what I wish to make you believe, that Bentie Winthrop is physically, what is too rare among Americans, a truly healthy girl? If you do, then you can understand that when the carriage which bore her and her father passed under the arched gateway guarding the entrance to the college grounds, she could not feel a bit afraid.

We will leave her now, for a few minutes, in order to take a survey of the spot where she is to live for the next five years, and whose every nook she will, long before that time will have expired, have learned to know by heart.

There is a farm of two hundred acres, of which just enough is reserved to supply the



college table with vegetables, fruits, milk and butter. It is situated on elevated ground, but apparently forms a portion of a vast plain, because of the circle of mountains by which it is surrounded. To the north rise the Catskills, which in the winter, with their crowns of snow touched by sunshine, look like kings. To the north-east are the Shawangunks, which in the morning light up with more wonderful opal and sapphire tints than any mountains I have ever seen. To the south are the Fishkill Mountains, steep, as seen from the college, and purple and cool. Directly in front—the college faces east and west—are lesser mountains, and at the rear rises Sunset Hill, precipitous, round and barren. Immediately surrounding the college are seventy-five acres, reserved for a park and laid out in long and graceful lawns and drives and walks. The crowning feature of the park is a circle a mile in circumference and completely surrounded by flower-beds, kept in order by those of the students who constitute the floral society.

Not far from the flower-circle is the observatory, which, from the time a girl first enters the college, is a place of interest and of much curiosity. In November, when stars are ex-



pected to fall, during eclipses, when any thing, in fact, is going on in the sky that does not happen there every day, a few who understand telescopes and astronomical clocks and stars, suns, moons, comets, etc., gather at night, on the observatory roof. A lady professor, for whom her scholars cherish the most unbounded love and admiration, is there to direct their observations. She is just like a girl among them, and yet, at the same time, she is a cultured, genial, dignified woman.

If you ever visit Bentie's college, be sure to obtain a peep of the observatory, of its little flower-garden in the rear, and to pause on a ridge, which the professor of astronomy says is exactly the height of the Tarpeian rock as it is to-day. All this, however, will be nothing, if you do not look into the wonderfully tender, honest brown eyes, and see the thick, gray curls and motherly smile of her who inevitably by her very presence and knowledge inspires those who study with her to more fervent, scholarly effort than they might otherwise make.

Now we will walk toward the east, descend a sloping ridge, cross a narrow, quiet brook, and enter upon a woodland path along which, in autumn, the chestnuts and leaves fall brown



and thick, and across which is spanned a romantic bridge, whence discouraged students, I dare say, contemplate suicide. Walking farther on, we find that the path leads us down a hill, across another bridge which has for a railing on one side a rough, farm fence; thence up Sunset Hill, whose eastern side is planted with fruit-trees and from whose summit art-students make sketches of the hills beyond the river, elocution students shout to the valley below and the sky above, and girls who have discovered a wonderful affinity view the sunset, the college, the riding-school, and each other.

From Sunset Hill look across the park, beyond the lodge, across the road, into the garden, a long, somewhat narrow strip of ground, and where delicious strawberries, grapes, and succulent vegetables grow. Do you catch through the thick, drooping branches of the willows a glimpse of water? That is the lake, once a neglected mill-pond, now deepened, lengthened, and occupied by a fleet of row boats by means of which the girls increase their muscles to an almost incredible extent. A very picturesque sheet of water it is; surrounded by a walk which on the west is sep-



arated from the garden by a steep, velvety terrace, and on the east is shaded by trees that grew years and years before the college existed.

The grounds are beautiful, you say, but, as I expected, you ask what induced an architect to plan such a curious-looking building to inclose the irrepressible spirits of four hundred ambitious, wide-awake girls.

I really cannot tell. These prim turrets north and south do appear as though they might belong to the Escorial gridiron of Philip II. of Spain ; and that dome in the center, with its flat appearance, as if it were an extinguisher ready to quench every flame of genius that threatened to ignite anywhere under its spacious interior ! But just ascend this economical and Dutch flight of steps leading to the front entrance. As soon as you are in Simpson College you will think it one of the most peculiar, but one of the most cheerful, edifices you ever entered. Its stairs and its halls or corridors are uncarpeted, but they are of the finest cedar and oiled ; the former are exceedingly wide and sloping, the latter are five hundred feet long, and broad enough for two columns of promenaders to pass with ease.



Off the second story corridor opens a suite of three parlors, furnished so tastefully and elegantly that the wealthiest or most refined may feel that she has brought home with her, and the poorest or most awkward that she is where she can be molded by the softening influences of beauty and taste.

The rooms for recitation are scattered throughout the great building; every one is large, airy, and comfortably seated. There are philosophical and chemical laboratories, there are large and valuable collections of birds, extensive geological and paleontological cabinets, a chapel carpeted and cushioned, an art-gallery, and for every five students a suite, consisting of three bedrooms and a parlor.

These are some of the material surroundings and appointments of a college where girls are mentally disciplined, as are boys at Yale, Harvard, Middletown, etc., and where they are, at the same time, trained to healthful habits by regular hours for retiring, a diet in which meat and Graham bread pre-eminently appear, and by sound, religious education.

Bentie and her father are ushered into a parlor, and are presently accosted by a tall lady in black silk. Her silvery curls and ani-



mated blue eyes at once attract the attention of visitors. She is the lady Principal, and on this, the opening day of the college, is fully engrossed in assigning new students examination papers and in attending to the statements of parents.

Bentie is presently given her paper and, with a bevy of girls with similar documents, leaves the parlor, and, according to written directions, repairs to room H, where sits a professor with eye-glasses and a look as if room H were filled full of invisible Greek and Latin books. Bentie now begins to feel a tremor creep down her arms and communicate with her fingertips, which become suddenly cold. Her mouth discovers a mysterious propensity to twitch. But, notwithstanding, she stands the test of Latin Grammar, elementary prose composition, and Cæsar, sufficiently well to have cabalistic signs put upon the piece of paper in her hand, and which she finds admits her to the second preparatory Latin. United States history, grammar, arithmetic, geography, all of the primary studies are overcome in triumph.

“In chemistry, think of it, Ben!” she writes, “the examiner told me that I must have had



superior instruction. There is a feather for your cap. I told him that my teacher was a practical chemist, and he looked up impressed, and said, 'Ah, indeed,' and wished to know your name. I could not resist saying, Professor Stanton, which is no story, by the way, for not long ago I became concerned about the exact meaning of professor, and, I assure you, the term from usage has come to be applied to almost any one of the masculine gender who teaches. So I, you see, as I taught myself, am professor of cooking rice and beets."

"I asked this gentleman with the eye-glasses whether he had ever heard of you, and he said, 'It strikes me that I have.' *Strikes*, I find, is a college term. They say here, 'That *strikes* me as fine.' 'He presented a *striking* thought.' 'The comparison is certainly very *striking*.' What would your authority, Richard Grant White, have to say, I wonder, about such a use of the word? Write him.

"Although as far as mere book knowledge is concerned, I came out in chemistry with flying colors, still I am going to study it here at some future time. O Ben, you must visit my college in order to see the beautiful rows on rows of bottles, retorts, and things in the



laboratory. And I hear that there is no end to the private experimenting done by the students. And such a library as there is! I am going to plan my hours for study ever so economically, in order to go to that great, booky, sunshiny room to read. Since I have been here I have been too glad for any thing that I was born a girl. The talk we had together over thoroughness, long ago, it seems now—do you remember it?—how you made me see that studying to *know*, not studying to *seem*, was what I needed. Here such a method seems the most natural course in the world to pursue.

“How could any one, not *a stupid*, live in this beautiful, cleanly, immensely roomy house—it does seem like a house, a *house*, although it is truly a college—and come out a sham? Ben, to-day, a dozen times, whenever I have thought of that finishing school of which I was once a member, I have drawn a long breath, I felt so choky.

“Now I must close; but, before I do, I say—and every single letter is in italics—I am in love with Simpson College; and, although I am only a second preparatory, called, in everyday language, “second Prep,”—this in infinites-



imally small letters—I am going to fight it out on the Simpson-College line until I graduate. Write ‘graduate,’ as ‘Sheridan’s Ride’ says, ‘in letters both bold and bright.’”

When sunset of examination day came, Bentie’s father, a proud and happy man, was on his way to New York; his “girl” was “in,” while some poor things from away out West were “out.” “Could not even be ‘first preparatories,’ although they had graduated from Madame Somebody’s,” he told Aunt Winifred, with whom he was going to reside until Bentie graduated.

Bentie, meanwhile, was setting her room in order. Do you know what that means, at least at Simpson College?

In a single room there is a wardrobe, a tall, rather narrow piece of furniture, but having a most capacious top. On this top, about the middle of the term, may be seen the motleyest variety of boxes and newspapers. The friends of Simpson students have a mania for sending the homesick ones newspapers. They blandly take it for granted that the college is *non est* in daily reading matter, with which, however, it is amply supplied. Thus it is that stacks of weighty metropolitan papers meet an igno-



minious fate on the wardrobe summits. Beside the wardrobe stands a wash-stand of chestnut; at right angles with it—the single rooms, such as Bentie's, are either pentagons or parallelograms—is a chestnut bureau, and opposite the bureau is a single spring bed, furnished with a good hair mattress, a pillow, and wholesome blankets, sheets, and counterpanes. No old-fashioned, soggy quilts disfigure Simpson College beds.

Bentie had a large room at home, and this exceedingly small one, although the ceiling is eleven feet high, was a problem.

Throwing the wardrobe door wide open, she began a systematic piling of boxes on its one inner shelf. Like most school-girls, she had been a month in collecting boxes in which to store away articles, and had brought no less than twenty, for each of which, I have not a doubt, my girl readers could find an immediate use.

By dint of twisting and pulling she had succeeded in moving one of her trunks, for the time being, into the little room. Then, locking the door and sitting down beside her ark, she indulged in shedding tears over every article she took out. Reaching, at length, at the



bottom of the trunk, her father's pleasant surprises in the shape of bon-bons, fruit, and nuts, she threw herself, with one long wail, on her pillow, and cried as if her heart would break, over—she did not know what.

But Bentie, as you know, is so sunshiny in her nature, that she directly began to wipe her tears away and forget all of her troubles for a whole hour, while packing drawers and wardrobe and giving extra peeps into the twenty boxes to see that every thing was all right.

After awhile a new girl rapped at her door—some one who says that “I am so home-sick I don't know what to do,” and wants to know whether she can come in. Before she goes out she knows how many sacks Bentie has, what her father's business is, and whether our friend intends to graduate. She tells, in return, what dresses she has brought, in how much doubt her mamma was as to whether party costumes would be required, and that she expects to receive a box from each one of her six particular friends.

Then they discuss the examinations, and think some of them “perfectly dreadful” and



others very easy. At length, when the retiring-bell rings, they are engaged to go to walk together the next day and are on the direct road to an intimacy. While walking they overhear two Seniors say that it is a great misfortune for Simpson College that Preps live under the same roof with Seniors.

"I consider," said one, "that it detracts from the tone of the college."

Bentie and her friend look at each other in blank amazement, and from that minute, for several days, have an uncomfortably in-the-way feeling.

"I have another problem, a 'live one so far as I am concerned, if not a 'live one," Bentie wrote her father soon after. "Please give me a definition of 'tones,' and why Preps generally are superfluities? I have another title now. I am an *Exoteric*."

As Bentie's letters explain themselves, answering in time all the questions that they ask, we will set aside Mr. Winthrop's more staid replies and continue our extracts:

"This is a queer place, papa. It is by no means a finishing school or a graded school. In the first, there was, as is said here, too little machinery, and in the second, too much.



Things have to work right at Simpson because of the 'tones,' which I have found out are the public opinions of the college. There are senior tones and Junior tones, and so on, way down to Prep tones. The latter, dear papa—and it is so snubbing to an aspiring girl like your Bentie—are invariably food for comment, from the President to the Preps themselves, whose views, I will say, are quite different from the President's. I used to think I was intelligent and advanced; but we Preps are watched just as if we were the specimens of which Darwin had been in quest. 'We are developing, or we will develop, or we wont develop,' is said, according as a case is more or less promising. Having thought of this subject one night, just before falling asleep, I awoke suddenly about midnight, imagining myself in one of the cabinets with the monk-eyes. Think of my horror!

"Now it is a Senior tone to dispense with 'slang'—something, dear papa, thanks to you and Aunt Winifred, that I seldom employ. I do wonder whether you can guess what is comprised in the 'slang' of a Senior of Simpson College. If Preps 'dote' on each other, or if they have 'racking' headaches, or see



'angelic countenances,' or are 'perfectly delighted' to kiss in the corridors, or walk in the corridors and up the stair-cases 'literally hugging' each other, as a Senior said, all this constitutes slang in words or actions. When these things occur reverend Seniors look amused and whisper 'Prepdom.'

"Papa, without hyperbole, it is almost annihilating, and I really ache to advance high enough to at least see the summit of the sublime heights of seniority.

"Now the worst of this letter is, dear, dear papa, that if a Senior saw it she would say, 'Prepish;' but you wont, will you?"

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"In my last I told you a little about tones. One of the professors revealed the mystery of the meaning of this word to Prepdom after some sentimental girl had risen in class and had demurred about reciting. 'Professor,' she said, 'it is absolutely impossible for me to recite—really it is! I get so nervous.' O, before I proceed—a foreign teacher here says that 'De Americans are de fooniest people, dat if a mudder have a foolish child and she wish oders to tink her smart, she say, she is only nervous. No matter what ails the bodies



or de brains or de souls of de Americans, dey are only nervous.'

"The professor gravely regarded the young lady, who, while his gaze continued, said twice, but the second time fainter than the first, 'I really can't.' He replied, 'You can never become a Senior so long as you manifest such nervousness and such inability over nothing. We shall consider you, if this continues, either physically or intellectually deformed.'

"If she had been feeble, papa, it would have been different; but she is a girl who makes more noise and disturbance than any other Prep in college.

"Now Senior tone means the higher in the course a student is, common-sense and a purpose, an ideal, as one of the lady teachers says. 'The most truly poetical and idealistic people in the world,' she remarked, 'are the most practical.' The more I think her remark over the better I like it.

"Freshmen do not embrace in public nearly so much as poor Preps; Sophomores (though fools) have fewer intimate friends than Freshmen. Why, I heard a Freshman tell a new-comer—in real earnest she was, too—that she had but thirteen intimate friends last year.



It does not seem to me that a Prep could have been more foolish. Seniors, at least many of them, I notice, seem to have no intimate friends. Those who do have such a possession show their preferences by more frequent companionship, conversation, and study together, than by exclamations over each other's perfections, physical and otherwise.

"Simpson is really a strange school, papa. I do not believe that there is another like it in the world. But I am wandering quite from the subject, 'tones,' about which I wish to speak fully. Now, the reason that Preps are kept on one floor, out of the regular college societies, and in the same classes, is—O papa, think of it! although many of us are at least as old as some Sophomores—because, in nursery parlance, we do not know how to behave ourselves. We are not even allowed a voice in the deliberations of the students' association, an organization composed only of Collegiates; and, much less, participation in the exercises of the Philobethan Society, whose object is literary improvement. As we are so immature in mental discipline, and consequently unfit to form proper business, literary, or other estimates on many important matters



essential to 'regular-course' proceedings, we have formed a society of our own. Its title is Exoteric, which means barred out.

"In all home comforts and conveniences, in the use of parlors and opportunities for lectures, etc., the Preps have equal advantages with the Seniors. But they are made to feel, and do feel, like children for whom higher privileges are held in reserve.

"The funniest part of it all is, that after a few weeks, the most spirited and rebellious Prep accepts her position, and honors the Seniors as representatives of something which wealth, position, beauty, cannot give, and that is, scholarly ability and general culture.

"I want, above all things, dear papa, to remain until I shall have passed out of a Prep existence into the highest grade of a Collegiate. So you must not grow weary in well-doing in keeping me at college. If you wont, one of these days I will make home a hundred times more attractive than I could otherwise do.

"Good-night, papa darling.

"BENTIE."



## IV.

## THE TEMPTATION.

**G**EORGE, meanwhile, entered upon his duties with just as much enthusiasm as did Bentie upon hers. His nature was quieter, less impulsive. Determination, however, was written on every feature.

He passed his examinations successfully, and, to Ben's admiration, his mother's pride, and his own joy, he entered unconditioned Sophomore. In a month he had taken his stand with both students and professors as a boy of promise.

In connection with a score of others, Ben and George formed members of a debating society whose meetings, held fortnightly, were eagerly anticipated and prepared for throughout the year with unremitting energy.

As we must hasten over many of the details in the lives of the girls and boys portrayed in this series, we will pass to the close of the year, to the last meeting of the "Champion De-



baters," in whose society George and Ben took an active part.

The meetings were held in the evening.

It is an exceedingly rainy night. Although the streets are muddy and the champions have some distance to walk to reach their hall, nothing daunted, they are all present to hear or participate in the debate on the question, "Resolved, That the United States are destined to become a Monarchy."

Ben, as might be expected, was president of the society. There was about him, as my readers have inferred, that which made him, wherever he went, a leader. His sense of order, his power of self-control, his readiness in always saying the right thing at the right time, and the broad and gentle home culture by which he had been molded from his infancy, were all so many forces which he had to use above the average boy. George Holmes found himself in daily friction with these advantages, which were due largely to birth and fortune; but, although Ben Stanton was in every social aspect his superior, he felt that intellectually he had no rival.

Ben was a Christian; George was not. Both boys were, however, human. Ben, with all



of his popularity, scholarly standing, and countless home blessings, saw that in George Holmes which made him feel that his humble friend would eventually eclipse him. This thought rasped his spirit. "First best" seemed to him the only goal worth reaching. The tempter came to him more than once, saying: "If it had not been for your kindness Holmes would never have been here to contest with you for the honors." Many a night he wrestled in prayer over the envy which repeatedly filled his heart, as day by day he saw George steadily rising in the esteem of the faculty. Over and over he said to himself: "If a thing is good only by comparison, it is worth nothing to me; I will be what I can, and do what I can, and admire with a glad heart whatever is excellent in others." It was this thought which animated him as he rose from his knees previously to leaving his room for the debating society.

Crossing the hall to his rival's apartment, he found George intent upon the debate. The latter welcomed him cordially, and then, motioning him to a seat, said:

"Wait just a few minutes, I want to get a point clear."



Ben sat down and watched George walk up and down the room, resolving evidently a perplexing question, for his brows were contracted and looked black and heavy above his deep, earnest eyes. His lips, set together, betrayed the iron will of their possessor. The competition with boys of advanced standing, and opportunity to turn the whole strength of his mind on study, had called forth a self-assertion that had remained latent in his more unfortunate days. As his firm step beat quickly and nervously upon the bare floor of his room, and his arm involuntarily gesticulated to the argument he was framing, Ben, true to his highest nature, forgot himself completely, and from the bottom of his heart was glad that God had used him as an instrument to widen his companion's career.

When George announced himself prepared, he and Ben, leaving the dormitory, walked across the broad campus silently and arm in arm. They were opponents in the debate, but just then in warm and loyal friendship they were thoroughly united.

George at length broke silence by saying:

"You ought to feel happy, Ben, that you are deemed enough of a debater to be sum-



moned by the unanimous voice of the society from your presidential chair."

"Well," said Ben, flushing over George's praise, and feeling at the moment in his generosity almost desirous that George's side should win, "I do feel happy when I consider that I am chosen to debate with you."

The hall was a long room, cheerful and suitably furnished by the society.

As Ben tapped his mallet, calling to order, the debaters promptly ranged themselves on opposite sides of the room, while those who were not to participate took a rear and central position.

When the business proceedings of the meeting had been concluded, the vice-president assumed Ben's place, and the latter took his seat among the debaters.

As the first boy on Ben's side rose to reply to the affirmative, which had been ably opened, and to argue, therefore, that the United States would not become a monarchy, Ben settled himself forward so as not to lose a word of what was said. George, forgetful of friendships, every thing but victory now, assumed an attitude of vigilant attention.

The speaker was a tall, ungainly, immature



youth, full of impulse, full of words, and having few ideas. Ben's cheeks flushed and his lips quivered for an instant as Caxton took his seat with a flourish, as if he had convinced the whole world, and in ignominious contrast with the first speaker on George's side.

George had shown his superior skill in a personal supervision of all the arguments prepared for the affirmative. He had culled and suggested and added, until each speech, from the first to his own, which was the last, should have a climactic effect, and trusted to individual ingenuity only so far as to caution each one to trip, if possible, his opponents by questions indicating real or apparent fallacies. Witnessing the laughable effect produced by Caxton's speech, he was morally certain that no response on his side could be any worse, and glowed with satisfaction as his second speaker sat down after a few cumbrous, but, after all, effectual hits at his opponent, and a short but connected argument against the perpetuity of a republican form of government in the United States.

Boy after boy spoke. Ben's side betrayed here and there a brilliancy and close reasoning that made our hero for the moment sure of



success. But the society could not but notice that the line of argument on George's side showed a careful arrangement and dignity with which the laughable boyishness and enthusiasm often manifested on the negative were in poor contrast.

When at length Ben rose to his feet George listened eagerly for his first words. As regarded himself, Ben was well prepared.

"I believe in the endurance of republican institutions in the United States, because I believe in the progress of humanity and a growing recognition of the rights of men as individuals."

"May I ask you a question?" interrupted George.

"Certainly you may," replied Ben, facing him squarely.

"If men, as individuals, have rights, irrespective of corporate power, why is your father a man worth thousands and the men whom he employs worth hundreds only?"

"Because my father and the business corporation with which he is connected have the general prudence and ability sufficient to gain thousands, where his men have only skill enough to earn hundreds."



“But suppose,” said George, trying another point, “that, notwithstanding so-called human progress, the majority should declare in favor of monarchical institutions. Their power, as a majority, to establish such institutions would prove their right, would it not?”

“Your question is not relevant to the subject for debate,” replied Ben, an angry flush rising, for a moment, to his brow. “We are debating, I believe, sir, on probabilities, not on right and wrong.” Then, instead of hearing his reply just here, he added: “The time when monarchy will rule will never come in the history of this country.”

“As the question is one of probabilities, prove that it will not,” retorted George.

Ben’s well-prepared line of thought was broken by so long an interruption, and it was with some awkwardness that he resumed his argument as he had originally planned it. Gradually mingling with it the thoughts that George had advanced, he continued:

“The rights of individuals coincide mainly with the rights of corporate bodies when those bodies are intelligent. Americans once had a bitter fight against taxation without representation. They rose in the North to a unit



when their right as individual voters was threatened by the vast aristocracy of the South. No body of men, in a question of civil rights, can, in this age of newspaper reading, gain such a monopoly of power as threatens for any length of time the interests of individuals. Political rights, properly understood, and the question of capital *versus* labor, are radically different questions," he concluded.

When George would have asked another question, Ben refused to reply. Then, feeling that his only hope of gaining the day was in an appeal to the patriotism of his fellow-debaters, he entered upon an historical harangue, showing, very plausibly, why republican institutions had hitherto been so short-lived, and alleging that monarchical governments were approaching a crisis when they would be compelled to emulate the example of the United States.

George sprang eagerly to his feet when Ben had concluded, but waited until the room had become quiet before he began.

"My opponent, in his desire to prove that republics were short-lived only because of the lack of a wide-spread intelligence, omitted to



notice the rock on which every republic has heretofore been shattered, and which will eventually be the ruin of the American republic. That rock is the controlling influence of wealth. Wealth in America, more even than in countries where monarchical institutions prevail, means position as a statesman, position as a politician, position in society, position in the Church. Our country to-day is at such an era in her history, that, without money, and large sums of it, almost every interest is powerless. In every city private wealth, so great is the monopoly of it becoming, affects the interest of thousands. There are corporate bodies, so called, but they are controlled either by one man, or, as in trades-unions, their avowed purpose is to pit the aggregate of small properties and small influences against one large one. In all cases it is a question of power, of power in the individual and power obtained through wealth. The tendency with man is and always has been toward individual greatness; hence, the time will come to America when the most powerful man will assume royal dignity.

“ My friend argues the growth of a humanitarian philosophy based upon the equal distri-



bution of rights. History has proved all efforts to accomplish such an end vain ; and that men, while apparently working for the general good, have sought their own aggrandizement. Trace what my friend calls philanthropy to its secret springs, and we find it the essence of selfishness.

“It seems to me that nations and men will always wrangle over the meaning of philanthropy until they learn to recognize the fact that strength and power, in nine cases out of ten, make right, and that the world will advance more rapidly when men, independent of intellectual vanity, will so train themselves that they can become individually powerful.

“A monarchy under such circumstances would not be absolute, and would contain all of the essentially liberal principles of republicanism. Offices would, of course, be somewhat under the influence of corrupt parties ; but, because of their duration for life, in the majority of cases, there would be less political evil and there would be time for evil to work its own cure. Until it can be proved that all evil can be expunged from humanity, the best thing we can do is to foster such institutions as will encourage as small a degree of it as possible.”



Thus George continued for some time, closing with a peroration that quite eclipsed that of Ben, although the latter had the advantage of making the final speech. He sat down all in a tremor to await the decision, which was soon returned in favor of the affirmative. The judges, however, brought in their verdict with wry faces, for they were all stanch believers in the glorious stars and stripes.

There was an animated discussion on the merits of the respective speeches when the society adjourned.

"Let us go down to the oyster-saloon," at last cried one boy, "and there finish talking the matter over."

Ben demurred, saying that his lessons for the ensuing day were to be learned; but his objections were overruled. Drawing George's arm within his own, in the midst of a throng of boys, eagerly talking as they went, our two friends pursued their way to the lower part of the town.

Smoking oyster stews were soon served, and they proceeded to eat with all that gusto which youths at school manifest for any thing at all differing from their ordinary bill of fare.

"Two dishes for me," cried a ruddy-faced



boy. "We are called hash-eaters up in town, and verily I believe we are something of the kind; I feel so hungry whenever I see any thing palatable."

"My coffee is weak, too weak for my tired brains," said the wit of the party; "so here's for wine. Waiter, claret in a trice."

"Going to treat, Watkins?" asked Frank Wilkes. "Better do so, lest you be the only one to go home merry. This debating society ought to be a corporate body."

The laugh went round the table, almost all joining in it uproariously and urging Watkins to a treat.

Three or four bottles of glowing, tempting claret presently made their appearance, and Watkins, clashing the glasses together and smilingly looking at Ben, poured one full of the sparkling liquor, and raising it on high, proposed "Our worthy president of the Champions!"

Ben sat shocked, powerless to reply, and in the interval some one shouted, "Hurrah! hurrah! a speech from our worthy president!" and then "A speech from our worthy president!" echoed around the table.

It was a trying moment to Ben. Just then



the saloon, with gilt and cheap hangings, its rows of tables surrounded wholly by men, the grinning mouths of the waiters, who were expecting a jolly scene from these college boys, the bottles of red wine, and the eager, excited faces above them, burned upon his vision like a picture of fire. Then, as if he had had wings, and a blast of cold air had suddenly blown him thither, he was in the little boat on Green Lake; and Bentie sat in front of him, her hand washing the long-stemmed, starry water-lilies back and forth in the calm water, her honest, earnest eyes looking into his and pleading with him to join the Church; then he stood beside her at the altar, where his infant head had received its baptismal consecration, to publicly assume the vows of a soldier of Jesus Christ. And here he was, wine before him, his honor pledged in a glass of ruby wine, his "best friends" expecting him to quaff it and make a graceful speech!

"Just this once, since I am in such a company," he pleaded with his conscience. "No," thundered the vows he had so recently made, and "O, no!" glistened in the tears of a pair of grave and sorrowful orbs which from his babyhood had been to him in moments of



doubt a mirror of all holy principles. Ben could not turn away from his mother.

"Gentlemen," he said, and his voice trembled, "the toast must be given in water if I respond."

Watkins looked up incredulously, and there went round the table one of those glances which condemn more than words can do.

"Are you in earnest, Stanton?" and one who stood high as a man of his word gazed with astonishment at Ben.

"Never more in earnest in my life," was the reply, in a firm and manly tone.

There was a momentary lull. The waiters stood looking on. Watkins, with his glass still raised, appeared considering what to do; others sat mute, expecting, and not a few were hoping, for a scene.

Suddenly, so suddenly that there was a general start, George arose to his feet. His dark eyes glowed with a savage, passionate fire; his lithe frame trembled and his voice quivered with intense emotion, as, extending his hand and forcibly snatching the glass of wine from Watkins's loose hold, he poured its contents into an empty dish, and began hurriedly, driven by the weary longing and



disgrace of his bitter childhood, to make an eloquent appeal.

“ Ben Stanton and I will never disgrace ourselves by an indulgence which will just as surely forebode our destruction as that I am standing here fatherless and nameless because of wine. Furthermore, if my father, while in college, had done as my comrade has to-night ; if he had discarded wine even after he married my mother, she would not be to-day a fragile woman, with no other home than her own frail hands can raise, and no other protection than the providence of, I hope, a merciful God, and the ambitious dreams of a son, whose chief desire is to eventually restore to her the practical benefits which strong drink made my father unable to confer. I am the son of a drunkard.”

George's voice, elevated to a ringing, penetrating key, trembled on the last word. He continued : “ It is a drunkard's son who begs you, because of his blighted childhood, his struggling, embittered boyhood, a youth that must be burdened with poverty, to desist from a terrible experiment. Don't tamper, at least to-night do not, out of respect to my strong feelings in the matter.”



Every eye was moist. The eyes of all in the saloon, quiet as a deserted room, were turned on the impassioned youth whose influence at that moment was supreme.

After a pause Watkins, looking up at George, who still stood, set the claret aside, and then, addressing his companions, said: "Three cheers for Holmes's mother and three more for her gritty son!"

The room resounded with the lusty voices of the debaters.

"Now," and Watkins waved his hand, "as loudly as ever you can, three cheers for our stanch and dignified president, Ben Stanton!"

Again the room rang with the voices of the boys. Then, without further ado, they left the eating-house, and, separating into groups, wended their way through the now deserted street, to the dormitories of their venerable *alma mater*.

George and Ben pursued their homeward walk for quite a distance in silence, but soon, the debate being mentioned by George, who, now that he was in the cool night air, wondered how he had courage to speak so plainly of what he rarely mentioned, the two boys began to compare notes.



"You are more of a business man—we will call it politician," said Ben laughingly, "than I. That was a fine idea of yours, that of posting your assistants before hand."

"Well, it was managing," replied George frankly. "But, to tell the truth, I felt like a traitor, following the line of argument I did, and like a hypocrite, for I did not believe one word of it. Why, Ben, the hope I cherish deep in my heart is to see the day when I shall stand up an uncorrupted and incorruptible statesman, defending, with all the learning I hope to achieve, and the eloquence I sometimes dare think I shall develop, the institutions which I believe are the surety of the world's final redemption from the slavery of social vice and the tyranny of capitalists."

"Institutions, George," said Ben, warmly, "whose principles, though embodied in the Constitution of these United States, were, ages ago, first enunciated in the Bible."

"They are there, it is true," replied George, after a pause; "but you know that while I appreciate the beauty and sublimity of Bible precepts, I cannot elevate them in the same sense that you love to do. I rank them with those of Plato, Bacon, Shakespeare, and others,



who wrote truth because they wrote humanity. I wish I could believe that they proceed from a still loftier inspiration than do the writings of men of genius. You cannot understand how strong this desire is. I have sometimes thought, in listening to eloquent sermons, that could I feel and earnestly believe those sermons, no calling would be grander or more inviting to me than the Bible one of an evangelist. But I wish to ask you a question concerning debates. What do you think of the moral influence on a fellow who deliberately works out a line of argument of which he does not believe a word?"

"I believe that the moral influence may be, and often is, the highest. In too many cases people, and especially boys, hold ideas which they have inherited or adopted without any real thought on their nature. By forcing themselves to ponder on the side of a question at variance either with their convictions or prejudices, they will either be strengthened in the former or weakened in the latter; that is, they come to understand all of the bearings of a subject.

"Besides, if we are to become statesmen, lawyers and ministers, we must learn to trace



thought and fallacy in all their subtelties. The best way to do so is to penetrate the arguments of those of our own age and experience. All the rules of logic and philosophy will avail us nothing, unless we immediately apply them. What better place than the debating society to do so?"

"I have thought much the same thing," replied George; "but then, the temptation, Ben." He turned squarely around and paused, looking at his companion, as if half afraid to utter his thought. The moon, which was beginning to break through the heavy clouds, cast a beam across his clearly-cut, intensely-earnest features. With an effort he continued:

"I sometimes feel, now that I have reached college, as if no person, let alone circumstance, should stand in the way of my ambition. You believe in God. I do too; but, Ben, he is a terrible being to me; powerful, unrelenting, grand. I can weep over Christ, but his unearthly goodness is such a mystery that I cannot comprehend it; his promises are so wonderful that I cannot really believe them. I can understand something of God's power, and power is something in which I glory; it is



that for which I am striving. My longing for it almost makes me tremble. When you, the best friend almost that I have on earth, were debating, and I ran over the line of my argument and saw that while it was less true, it was tenfold more plausible than yours, I had such a fierce satisfaction in the thought of success that I was ashamed almost to distraction. Now what am I coming to if I feel so selfishly toward a friend?"

George's voice was full of sadness. Ben regarded him with a mingled expression of pleasure and pain difficult to analyze. He formed a marked contrast to George, who, though tall and powerfully built, was emaciated and pale from incessant study. Ben's work was so even, his abilities so well balanced, that he seldom knew what it was to be driven by his tasks. His clear brown eyes and healthy skin, his broad shoulders, round, compact, unusually developed for one of his age, his manly frankness and polished manners, evident even in trifles, always awoke in George a desire for such a rest as his friend seemed to embody. But George had only expressed to Ben a temptation that he had felt almost as strongly and would perhaps have experi-



enced quite as strongly had his early years known the privation and longing of George's. All that had helped Ben to achieve the victory over his selfish desires was a comprehension and an imitation of that unselfish love which Christ had embodied in his life on earth, a life which, as George had honestly said, he did not understand.

Ben's nature was so chivalrous that when George expressed his ambitions in such plain language, he seemed to see the full ugliness of the sin he had been in danger of committing, and, curious contradiction as it may seem, was loth to acknowledge it, just because of the ugliness it seemed to embody. But he knew whence his help had come and his duty to make that fact known to George.

"I had the same temptation, George, in perhaps another form. Even in our Sophomore year, I cannot but see that if I am not valedictorian you will be. I came hither with the intention of graduating first from my class and find myself destined to disappointment, George," and Ben laid his hand on his companion's shoulder. "It takes all of the Christian grit I have some days to feel downright glad that you are here, and to feel



chiefly proud of good because it is good. I love applause."

George was touched. Again from this wealthy, carefully cultured youth he was learning a lesson of the beauty and grandeur immeasurably above mere learning and distinction. He felt a sudden, intense, uncontrollable longing for a sanctifying love to God, more unselfish even than that he bore for his mother.

"I may not be valedictorian, Ben," he said, his voice trembling; "but if I were to be, I would relinquish the honor a hundred times were I able to say that Christian love prompted the act. I am so angular and crooked in my nature that I sometimes feel there are fearful battles before me. I love you, Ben Stanton," he added emphatically and suddenly, sealing his avowal by a warm grasp of the hand, as they passed under the grand old trees that shaded the campus.



## V.

## AN INTIMATE FRIEND.

BENTIE'S year in college had been an uneventful one, so far as school-girl escapades were concerned. She had recited her three lessons, practiced her music, exercised in gymnastics, eaten three meals daily, and slept soundly every night, week after week and month after month.

She is no taller, but she is stouter. After her walks the roses in her cheeks glow and her gray eyes grow darker, and brighter too, until one almost queries whether they are black.

She stands well in her classes, but not above the average. She wrote this fact home to her father, and was a little inclined to despond. He answered by quoting the old fable of the tortoise and the hare—a fable, by the way, to which American fathers and mothers are beginning to feel the need of paying more attention in the face of stubborn facts in regard to health.



"If you continue at the even, sure pace in which you have commenced, I have no fears for your fifth year. Each year will so develop your capacity that, when you are a Senior, you will find yourself possessed not only of a fund of knowledge, but a power of application that will make you a pleasure to yourself, a power to your friends, and a necessity to any circle in which you may be thrown. Remember, Bentine, that you are working not for college honors, but for life usefulness."

Not every college girl receives such letters as Bentine's father wrote her. There were some who grew greedy of every minute not spent in study, feeling that it would be a disgrace not to graduate with high honors. The wise suppression that Mr. Winthrop brought to bear on his daughter only kept her ambition within bounds, for she was aspiring and enthusiastic.

Hence, when Bentine passed her examinations and was registered Freshman for her second year, no one thought of her except as a charming, healthy, and conscientious girl. The faculty did not discuss her either *pro* or *con*; doubtful cases, either of prodigies or stupidities formed the theme of their general de-



liberations. Fortunately for the world, good scholars, like good people, take care of themselves and leave courts of justice, laws, and law-makers to look after recalcitrant cases.

You will be surprised that, after my telling you so much about Bentie's general success, I have to chronicle some acts of disobedience.

She had, as we have before hinted, acquired, what is, in nine cases out of ten, a bane to a scholar, an intimate friend. To her, Bentie read her letters and told her home secrets and confided her opinions and revealed her thoughts with that lavish generosity and abandonment which only a school-girl shows; and she received in return just what she gave. The two girls walked together, boated together, practiced gymnastics together, and became such "unchangeable friends" that at length they went to the lady principal and petitioned to room together.

"Why should they not?" was the thought that arose in the principal's mind. Bentie was what was called one of the "good girls," her friend was one of the "promising girls," seemed to study unceasingly, and moreover, among her companions, had the reputation of being a person of much honor.



So Bentie and Adah had their request granted.

"I like the first floor better than any other, don't you?" asked Adah, as she kneeled between her trunk and her bureau to arrange her drawers just after the change of room had been made.

"No, I never did like it as well as the others. I do not feel so secure as I would up higher, and it is so much noisier here. But this room is certainly pleasant, and we are fortunate in having the corner."

There were two broad, low windows in the apartment, and in one of these Bentie seated herself, looking out over the vivid April grass and beyond to the floral circle, where bits of warm coloring peeped through the shrubbery.

"Well, I like the first floor because it has always had the reputation of being the gayest and the one most left alone by teachers; and if there is anything I despise, it is a teacher tramping like a policeman past one's door and poking her head in to say good-night when all she wants is to look around."

"She has a right to look around," said Bentie softly.



"Then let her do it boldly, and not smile like a hypocrite. If I were a spy, I would be an out-and-out one."

Adah pursed up her lips, shook out energetically the folds of the garment she had just taken from her trunk, and bravely and honestly looked up to Bentie. "This is a college, Bentie, and if we girls do not demand collegiate rights, why, we shall never have them," continued Adah, rising to arrange her frizzes, which were always getting into the most charming disorder and requiring a hundred daily manipulations. "There'll be changes in Simpson College before you and I step off the stage."

Bentie fidgeted in her seat. Because she had always obeyed and had loved to do so, having been brought up under no arbitrary constraint, Adah's sentiments, expressed without any real cause, annoyed her. She replied, "As we are only Preps, would we not better leave these questions to the regular students?"

Adah, pausing in her hair-dressing and looking at Bentie a moment, replied: "You are not one of those Puritans, I hope, Bentie, who obey every little rule made by a faculty and



half the time by under-teachers. They forget two thirds of them themselves a week after they are made, and all the thanks a submissive student receives is her trouble for her pains. I came here to study, and I intend to do so when I can and how I can and take the consequences. The consequences that one takes are always better than the consequences one is obliged to receive," concluded Adah, throwing her arms, with a great deal of warmth, about Bentie, and giving her a downright, hearty, school-girl kiss. "I am tired of fussing about, so let's get out that Latin before tea, shall we?"

Adah had a wonderfully persuasive manner in the least thing that she undertook, and Bentie, who loved her dearly and did not readily become fatigued over any thing that she did, assented, glad to please Adah, glad to put, as soon as possible, her most difficult lesson out of the way, and chiefly glad to change a subject on which she did not feel quite at home.

So the two girls sat down in their north window through which the soft spring breeze came blowing, and forgot all about their differences of opinion in their search for fine translations, the "best word" to express their



meaning, and in scanning, with which Bentie was charmed, as she had soon developed a power to scan correctly by ear almost every kind of Latin verse.

But after awhile Adah's remarks recurred to Bentie, and they annoyed her. Like most other girls, she shrank from being thought a "harmless," "meek," "sweet little thing." With the majority of school-girls goodness means a quality by virtue of which one of their companions has neither the ability nor the desire to be otherwise than gentle and insignificant.

Adah Middleton replied when some one asked her how it was that *she* came to room with Bentie, by saying that she hardly knew why.

"But isn't she a nice little thing—something comforting about her? If she were not so good she would be splendid company, too," concluded Adah, who had repeatedly endeavored to coax Bentie into frolics after the retiring-bell had rung, or into Sunday molasses-candy pulls, and various other surreptitious proceedings, but as yet without avail.

So long as Bentie had had a room to herself she had remained firm against all of Adah's en-



treaties; but now that she was to room with her, it was a question in her mind, after a week's experience, how she was to keep rules as she had heretofore done. The room was half Adah's, and, as Bentie was not Adah's only friend, it was a rendezvous for other students who did not believe that their honor depended on being in bed at ten o'clock, or on any thing, in fact, but their standing as scholars and their faithfulness toward one another.

How silly Bentie felt in going to bed as the last bell sounded, while Adah and her friends sat sometimes studying, sometimes talking, and often eating sardines and crackers, nuts and candy, or strawberries and ice cream. They seemed to have such a jolly time that often she did not know how to remain quiet a minute longer.

One night, when the stories were unusually funny and the laughter, notwithstanding all effort at repression, loud and merry, she found herself, almost before she was aware, sitting bolt upright in bed and telling a story that rivaled any of its predecessors.

The girls gathered around the bed and on the bed, only too glad to have the silence with which Bentie had bound herself broken.



Suddenly the springs gave way, down came the bed, and Bentie found herself inadvertently the cause of Adah's remaining up till midnight—a fact the latter took pains to impress upon her mind, with the lesson that since she had disobeyed rules once, she might as well continue to do so.

“But I did not think before I did it,” said Bentie.

“O pshaw!” exclaimed Adah; “you would be ten times as nice as you are if you would do a few other things before you think. Go to bed if you choose, but after this you must do your share in telling stories.”

Thus Bentie by one act exposed herself to such a battery from the girls that gradually, yet almost before she was aware, she found herself one of the leaders in conversation and occasionally tasting of the dyspeptic dainties. Still, to her firmness be it said, that such acts were only occasional, and always against her better judgment. She experienced her chief difficulty in having hours or time enough for any thing, so frequently was the room filled with visitors whenever Adah was in. The latter was in the habit of rising at three or four o'clock in the morning to make up for the time



lost through the day, for, though bent on a good time, she never once fell below her standing as one of the first among the Preparatories. Bentie had never allowed herself to read or study out of hours.

One stormy night, when the rain was dripping musically on the wide stone sills of the windows, and the college was hushed with the silence of eleven o'clock, Adah, having dismissed her visitors, produced a novel, and, sitting on the bed up against the head-board, proceeded to read. The head of the bed was under the gas, and Bentie tossed about, nervous from the light, the long-continued noise, and the multitudinous odors, among which that of sardines predominated. The room was filled with the oily, fishy odor.

"Why don't you go to sleep, Bentie?" asked Adah.

"O, I don't know; because I can't, I suppose. I guess I am nervous," was the patient reply.

"Does the light hurt your eyes? This novel is the most interesting one, it seems to me, that I have ever read. I am right in the midst of a ghost-story. It would make your two eyes like stars start from their sockets.



Shall I read aloud?" rattled Adah, anxious to have Bentie comfortable, and at the same time not wishing to put her reading aside until the book was finished.

"O no, please don't, Adah, and do come to bed. The room is so bright."

"It's the light, then?" said Adah, a little thoughtfully, and then, as she sprang from the bed, "I have an idea, Bentie. I'll put my umbrella over you."

Bentie breathed a smothered sigh as Adah raised a huge umbrella and planted it on the bed over her head.

"There, isn't that a useful invention? Now go to sleep like a good child, and I will hurry up with my story. You are a silly goose though, my dear, to be so over-conscientious." She presently became absorbed, and, forgetful of every thing around her, read on and on until long after midnight.

Bentie, meanwhile, afraid to complain further, exerted every power to lie quiet. By and by sharp neuralgic pains began to shoot through her temples and down her back. The minutes seemed endless. "If Adah were only a little more in awe of authority and not quite so quick to learn, what nice times we would



have rooming together," was her thought at about one o'clock, as Adah, with the exclamation, "Pshaw, it doesn't end nicely at all!" forcibly closed her book, threw it on the floor, and, reaching up to turn out the gas, fell over on Bentie with such force that she uttered a scream of pain.

"Did I waken you, Bentie? Are you hurt, my dear?"

"I have not been asleep at all."

"Why didn't you tell me? I would have come to bed. You will tell me the next time, wont you?"

But the next time came so often, and the book or the fancy work was so absorbing, that Adah inevitably had an excuse to remain up just a little longer, and Bentie learned to lie quiet, and also acquired a bad habit of lying awake for two or three hours.

Bentie's rich color began to fade, her eyes to acquire a strained, dull look, and when she did sleep her dreams were troubled and wildly distorted. Adah, on the contrary, who never borrowed trouble, and was almost utterly regardless as to whether others were pleased or displeased with her, slept dreamlessly, and, with the exception of losing a little flesh,




found herself able to endure the extra exertion.

Bentie unconsciously, though never remaining up long beyond the hour of retiring, gradually lengthened the time for preparation for bed, and often found herself up ten or fifteen minutes after the last bell had rung.



## VI.

## THE CONFESSION.

NE morning, after Adah had been up unusually late, and Bentie's face looked bloodless and tired from protracted wakefulness, the lady principal, after prayers, looking gravely over the hundreds of young faces before her, said:

“Young ladies, we place you largely upon your honor, imposing only such rules as are necessary for your standing as scholars and the preservation of your health. We do not steal upon you in slippers and feet; in all essentials, we accord you the same confidence and afford you many more comforts and refinements than you could have had if you attended a college for gentlemen. Because you cannot endure the rigor of from four to six years of study and the dissipation of late hours, late suppers, and exciting reading at midnight, we require that you all be in bed at ten o'clock. Young ladies, unless you can trust your welfare to us in



these four particulars, treating us with as much confidence as we show toward you, we do not want you here. I desire every student who has kept her gas burning after ten o'clock to report to me before to-morrow."

The lady principal was a woman whose very presence was calculated to inspire the students with awe. Above middle height, and majestic in carriage, when she was indignant her clear blue eyes flashed, and her whole face, expressive even in repose, was a perfect mirror of the feelings which agitated her. Dressed, as regarded trimmings, with great plainness, her toilet was, nevertheless, always exquisitely neat and often elegant. She was in all matters of taste and dress a woman whom mothers could wish their daughters to imitate. Bentie had often followed her with admiring glances when she walked majestically down the long corridors, and had made many a silent resolve to never incur her displeasure. She felt as if she would sink through the floor should any thing occur to call her to a private audience over misdemeanors. Now the time had come. She was far too honest to wait for a summons, and too high-spirited to relish the thought of a series of cross-questionings, as if she were a



criminal. Adah left the chapel with feelings quite different from Bentie's. "There will be a fuss, no matter how you may arrange it. So I shall let the fuss come to me. Never borrow trouble, my dear," she said patronizingly, as Bentie, sitting down beside their pleasant eastern window, reviewed her case.

"Without any 'ifs and ands' about it," she said at length, a little excitedly, "I have done wrong, Adah Middleton, and I am sorry for it. The only thing in regard to the matter that I am puzzled about is the form of my confession. I haven't any possible excuse, and Miss Rushmore always wants a reason, and a good one too, for every thing."

"O, go to her and tell her that your roommate delights in midnight orgies, and that you have consequently fallen into bad habits," said Adah sarcastically, speaking, for the first time since they had roomed together, with total disregard to the finer moral nature of her companion. Adah had all along secretly felt that what she called her companion's goodness answered for both of them. It argued well for her that Bentie, quiet, obedient, gentle Bentie, had wanted her for a room-mate.

Bentie leaned her chin upon her hand, and,



though her eyes filled with tears over Adah's insinuation, made no reply. She had not intended for an instant to implicate her friend, and her generous nature was sorely wounded that Adah could suspect she would. Her heart turned, as it always did when she was in trouble, to Aunt Winifred, and she felt that she would give much for some of her motherly advice in this dilemma.

All day long she revolved in her mind the method of her confession. When night came, feeling sure that questioning would lead her to mention Adah, she decided to write. After frequent rewriting and rewording, she at length with trembling fingers deposited in Miss Rushmore's letter-box a note which read as follows:

“MY DEAR MISS RUSHMORE: I have repeatedly broken a rule by remaining up a few minutes after ten o'clock, and twice by inadvertently engaging in conversation until a late hour. I have hesitated about acknowledging my faults, as I have no reasonable excuse to offer. I beg your pardon, and promise to retire punctually during the remainder of my connection with the college.”



Bentie felt that her note sounded stiff and formal. She had, between a fear of appearing hypocritical and a dread of implicating Adah, experienced great difficulty in framing any kind of a letter that would suit her case. When the note was out of her hands she felt better, though, than she had in a long time; especially since Adah, in spite of her protestations, felt a little timid about remaining up for the present. Bentie had darkness and quiet sufficient to enjoy a long and restful night's sleep. But she feared to meet Miss Rushmore. She was sure that, as soon as that lady had an opportunity, she would talk to her at great length not only over her disobedience, but her daring in breaking a rule without any excuse for so doing. She spent a weary week in dodging Miss Rushmore. She began to hope for a summons, all her efforts to the contrary notwithstanding. This criminal feeling was dreadful.

On Saturday morning Bentie started from her room with the intention of going to the library, which was in the center of the vast building. As she stepped into the corridor her eyes instinctively sought the lady principal's doors. They were closed, and her own poor



guilty self was the only one to be seen. She drew a breath of relief and started down the long hall when suddenly, around an angle two or three hundred feet distant, she saw Miss Rushmore's stately form appear and pause.

What was to be done? An encounter seemed inevitable, and yet poor Bentie had such a shaking about her knees that she felt she must defer it for the present. If some one that she knew would come out of one of the many rooms opening on the corridor! As if in answer to her wish, almost at the same instant, three doors opened and between Bentie and her judge were three of her friends with whom she might become engaged in conversation and thus have an excuse for passing Miss Rushmore unnoticed.

She seized the arm of the first one and had just begun to talk vivaciously when her companion, stopping by a staircase, said, "I'm in a hurry and must go up here. Tell me some other time."

Bentie walked on, the thought not occurring to her that she might retrace her steps. She overtook the second student, but only in time to see her turn away and enter a room. The third one, just as the distance between herself



and the lady principal grew alarmingly short, struck with the recollection of something that she had forgotten, paused, and then, hurriedly turning, left the space empty between Bentie and her judge, who fortunately, Bentie thought, stood at such an angle that she might not notice her. Fixing her eyes on the further end of the corridor, without turning her head, she walked rapidly on. Now she is opposite Miss Rushmore, now ten feet beyond, and is safe.

Softly, penetratingly, like a sentence of doom as it seemed to her, Bentie heard her name pronounced. Thoroughly frightened and excited now, she paused, and then, like some machine, mechanically walked toward her principal, who was leaning on the baluster, her eyes fixed upon her pupil's countenance.

At length the gulf was bridged and Bentie stood beside her, eyes downcast, tears struggling for the mastery.

Miss Rushmore gently took her hand, bent and kissed the sad, broad, guilty brow, and saying, hardly above a whisper, "Dear, I received your note," pressed her hand.

Bentie looked up so pleadingly, so contritely, that Miss Rushmore, experienced as she was, felt her eyes suddenly moisten. She



pressed Bentie's hand again, and saying, "That is all I wish," released her.

Bentie! If the sun had come down and overwhelmed her with a glorious, blinding, bewildering radiance, she could hardly have felt warmer, happier, more transformed. She felt as though she had suddenly wakened from an ugly nightmare to gaze upon a serene and joyful June morning.

Entering her parlor with bounding steps, she hastened into their bedroom, where Adah was sitting, and, taking a stool at her feet, related, between tears and smiles, how kindly Miss Rushmore had received her.

Adah looked incredulously at Bentie, and then ejaculating, "Is that so!" said, "Well, I am beginning to feel the need of sleep, and guess I will confess too and promise obedience for the remainder of the year. I'll go at the next office-hour."

Adah went. She looked so confident, acknowledged so graciously that she had transgressed, and begged Miss Rushmore's pardon with such perfect ease and self-possession, that that lady, divining the cause, repressed her inclination to smile, and delivered a moral lecture that called the blushes to Miss Middleton's



cheeks and sent her away humiliated and feeling that she had been a very great simpleton in acknowledging with her lips what she did not feel in her heart.

Somehow, after this episode, there was a change. Bentie felt that she had acted in accordance with her convictions; Adah, that she was occupying a position that was almost intolerable. The latter had never been restrained, and the yoke which she had put upon herself and which Miss Rushmore took care that she wore daily, chafed more and more. After awhile she began to condemn Bentie as the cause of her momentary submission, and to seek society wholly outside of her parlor.

Although Bentie patiently bore this neglect, yet she was too proud-spirited to remain in such close proximity to one who so totally misunderstood her. When the June vacation came she felt that she had learned a lesson that would lead her to keep a single room if she were fortunate enough to secure one for another year.

So she and Adah parted—without words, without kisses. Right and wrong principles could no more harmonize in their case than in




that of multitudes of others who have tried to combine them and have failed.

The grand lesson, therefore, of Bentie's first year was this: that health, self-respect, and scholarship seemed inevitably connected with a proper respect for those placed in authority, and with obedience to rules; that for solid comfort and enduring friendship she must seek companions among those who had the same Christian principles as she herself.



## VII.

## A TRAGIC SCENE.

 MARCH storm was brewing. Along the horizon hung masses of dull, gray clouds that curled down over the hills and crept slowly toward the valleys until they were enveloped in a damp, raw, penetrating mist. The sun hung in the heavens like the sickly, deadened light of a smoke-begrimed lamp. Now and then through the bare and toughened branches of the trees the wind swept with a sharp, short wail. The night came on. The foot-passengers on the street hurried their pace, and those within-doors drew nearer to the fire.

Down by the Battery, with his face turned toward the upper part of the city, was a tall, quaint, but powerfully-built man. He looked irresolute. His eyes were hollow and despairing. Hunger was stamped upon his features. His clothing was tattered. His hands trembled as he folded closer about his form his



ragged coat, as the wind came up from the sea with a boom in its voice, as if it were a trumpet announcing a battle.

The man turned his desolate eyes upon a street-car as it jingled by with its lights and passengers. He made a movement toward it, as he fumbled in his pocket, and then muttering, "No money," walked slowly and staggeringly forward. He was dizzy with drink, but he was fully conscious of what he did.

On and on he walked, occasionally pausing before some window filled with rich food or fine apparel, occasionally shrinking into the shadow of a wall as the eyes of others on the street were attracted by his peculiar appearance. There was a certain grandeur about him, despite his rags and general uncanniness. The mist had condensed into rain, which fell with a steady, sad drip upon the pavements and in cold freezing drops upon the head and face of the drunkard. But still he walked on amid the glare and life of Broadway. He reached Twenty-third Street. Coming out on Madison Square, he paused, as if exhausted, and then sank down, stupidly and suddenly, upon a bench beside the empty fountain. On the



square was a little Swiss *chalet*, where refreshments were sold in the day-time. Its diminutive gables and brackets were tipped with icicles which gleamed coldly as now and then the gas-jets lighted them. There was no glow or sound within. It and every thing around it looked deserted. Across the square was a great clock, whose black face stared solemnly down upon the pavement, and which seemed to have turned into a dozen eyes. Its fingers pointed to eleven o'clock. Just behind it was a vast hotel, whose marble front, already discolored by dust and rain, looked as if it were weeping with sorrow despite the myriad cheerful lights shining through its hundred windows. Around the hotel, down Twenty-third Street and Broadway, rattled the omnibuses.

A bell from some church tower tolled eleven o'clock. Right after, from the doors of a theater not far off poured the pleasure-seekers. The drunkard glanced at the carriages filled with those who gave no thought, on that bitter, chilly night, to the vagrants everywhere around them. Not one in passing the square noticed in the gloom the bent, forsaken wanderer sitting in the rain.



When the streets were becoming quiet and only at long intervals passengers crossed the square, the drunkard rose, and, drawing his hat down over his eyes, started in the direction of the East River.

Coming toward him were a woman and a boy. The latter, whose eyes were every where in a minute, and who, though not over twelve years of age, was familiar with every street and alley in the great city, looked up into his companion's face, and said: "There is the very man of whom I spoke to you to-day; the one I saw by Castle Garden when I was selling the morning papers. I never saw a face like his, ma'am, before."

The three came face to face in the full glare of a street-lamp. Mechanically and vacantly the man turned his eyes upon the woman and the boy, abroad at such a late hour and in such weather. She glanced into his face, somewhat curious after the boy's description. That look made them both pause, made the woman blanch and the man bend forward with a wild, questioning gaze, and a moment later he hoarsely ejaculated, "Miriam!"

She held out her hands on hearing her name, and while the tears ran down her cheeks, said:



“Are you ready, now, to come home to me, George?”

He bent his head upon his breast, then, looking down on the delicate and plainly but well-dressed woman at his side, said, “Yes, if you can take me back after my desertion.”

“I married you, George, for better or for worse, and to-night the worst is the best for me.”

She took his arm with a suppressed tenderness in her attitude, and the boy, who was none other than Job, leading the way, the two walked toward the west.

Job went along nodding to himself and looking very cross. He had felt such a worshipful reverence for Mrs. Holmes that now seeing her walk arm in arm with that vagabond of a man was too much for his patience. “She is too good for him,” he muttered; and then he reproached himself for pointing the vagabond out.

Job knew too well what a home made desolate by drink was to cherish any imaginary romances over this drunkard, tattered and forlorn as he looked. He knew what it meant to receive a kick for a kiss, a blow for a “thank you,” starvation at home while plenty was



poured forth in the dram-shops. So it was in no peaceable frame of mind that he inserted the night-key into Mrs. Holmes's door, and listened as he preceded them to the uncertain steps of their strange companion.

When the gas was turned on and the fire in the grate uncovered, and her husband looked around on the coziness and plenty every-where visible in the plodding woman's house, he sank wearily into a chair, and, uttering a stifled groan, covered up his face.

This touched Job, who accordingly began to act irresolute. He stood for a moment, with hat in hand, regarding Mrs. Holmes, who was leaning on the mantle, her eyes on the fire.

"I guess, ma'am, that I will go to bed; but I wont sleep," he added, "and if you need me, why I will be up in a minute."

Job disappeared, his throat choking. He cried himself to sleep, wishing that he could bear more burdens for his new friends than somehow fell to his lot.

Left alone with the man who had deserted her when her son was not much more than a babe, the past rushed upon the patient woman like a flood. The tide swept up strong and



full now, and, sinking down in a heap beside the grate, she buried her face in her hands and wept. At this the man sat up, and, with something of the same look of desperation and melancholy that his face had worn when he was out in the rain, he rose and tried to pace the floor. He went to the window and leaned his face against the pane. The howl of the wind, rain, blackness, desolation were without. He turned round, and then, as if it were a farewell to every thing good in the world, he glanced at the various objects in the room, then at his bowed and now silent wife. He stood lingeringly, regretfully. Then, advancing toward her, like a condemned culprit, he bent down and kissed her, saying, "I will go, Miriam."

She sprang up with a cry of pain and great longing, exclaiming, "No, O no, you shall not go, George, dear George!" and she laid her head on his arm with so much tenderness and love that a glad, solemn surprise shone out from his sharp and wasted features. Was he really wanted, he who had proved recreant to the highest, holiest vows that a man can assume?

She looked up and stood erect with the



firmness that had supported her through long, neglected years, and said, "You have not asked about our son, our boy George."

"O—our boy?" and the man, his senses perhaps becoming confused by the warmth of the room and the violence of his momentary emotion, looked questioningly into the eager face of his wife.

A stifling pain smote her heart. Could sickness, hunger, misery, the sharpness, even of death allow her to forget her son, her only son? And here his father stood and knew not that such a gift had ever blessed his life. Her woman's nature was angry now.

"Have you sunk so low—so low that you have forgotten half the sin of your desertion? Do you remember me because I can give you bread and drink?"

Still the same vacant look; a momentary shudder, a tottering. The man fell prone to the floor in a dead faint.

"Job, Job, help!"

In an instant Job was in the room and his stout little arms, together with Mrs. Holmes's nervous strength strung to desperation, succeeded in placing the drunkard on a sofa. He was a long time in recovering from the swoon,



and when he did so he seemed stupefied, yet gentle and tearful as a little child sobbing over it knows not what. He took the hot drink offered to him and presently sank into a profound, lethargic slumber.

Job had seated himself on a stool and when the great man was actually asleep he turned to Mrs. Holmes and asked,

“What are you going to do with him?”

“Take care of him.”

“I wouldn’t. I have seen lots of them just as taken down as he is. As soon as they are warmed and a bit stronger and think they are provided for they are just as bad as ever. You’d better not,” and Job looked like some wise physician at the prostrate man.

Mrs. Holmes could not be offended, the boy was so simply earnest. She knew that whatever he urged was for her sake.

“Job, my boy, what if I had said the same about you when you came to me ragged, dirty, and from a grog-shop.”

“The odds is altogether different, ma’am,” replied Job with an independent respect. “There’s no knowing how a boy will turn out. He’s a man,” and Job pointed his one remaining finger at the sleeper.



“Doctors say that while there is life there is hope.”

“But it is a hope nigh as good as none. Why, don’t you see how it will be?” and Job stood up in his earnestness. “It’ll cost all you’ve laid by for George to clothe his father, and it will take the time from the school, and things and you and all of us will go to ruin generally. I don’t care for myself so much, but I care for you. You’re too good for him.” And Job sat down on his stool, and, burying his chubby face in his hands, cried.

I wonder, girls and boys, whether you can realize Mrs. Holmes’s position.

There were fifty children comforted and, in the best sense of the word, housed through her daily care. She had one son who had always been obedient and whose ambition and scholarship promised to atone in a measure for the sorrow and disgrace of the past. She had friends, too, now, and among them were those who loved her, and all respected her. As she sat there, looking at the future, whose horizon till this evening was tinged with a rosy glow that had been long in dawning, and back at the profound shadows of the past, represented by her fallen husband, the question was not



one of love, but one of duty as to what was to be done.

She forgot all about Job as she sat there thinking of the strange way in which her husband had returned. She believed in providences. Was this one? What if it should break up her school? What if George should have to come from college? What if they should suffer again the disgrace of a drunkard's home? Would it then be a Providence? Job evidently thought not, and was he not right? While she pondered a sense of Heaven and all its vast concerns, a sense of a future of woe when all of this earth's struggles should be laid aside by her husband, came to her. No; she could not send the wretched man away. Perhaps he would reform. Perhaps he would by and by remember the son of whom he had such reason to be proud. Thus, when she at length spoke to Job she said:

"I believe, Job, that God sent my husband back to me and that it is my place and my son's to care for him. I am sure it will be a labor of love as well as of duty."

As soon as she had said this she felt a great weight lifted from her heart. It is good sometimes for the old to confide their thoughts to



the young. Having made up her mind as to what to do, she felt she had a right to all the love she had endeavored to repress for him who had deserted her.

Job acted as though he could not understand such love and such generosity, and said bluntly, after profound meditation :

“What if he should kick and beat you some night.”

“I don’t think he will, my boy.”

“You can’t tell nothin’ about it. They’ll turn as sudden. They’re queer,” he added emphatically. “But, Mrs. Holmes, I’ll never leave you. I wouldn’t help my own father when he got drunk, but I’ll help this man for you.”

Job looked down at the sleeper as if he pitied him, but his commiseration was the pity of supreme contempt.

“Well, I am glad you will. But, Job, this man you see—so fallen—” Mrs. Holmes hesitated to utter these last words. But she was with an honest boy, and the plainer she spoke the more weight her words would have. “This man is my husband, and very dear to me. He was once so good and so strong that I thought there never had been any one so good and so strong. I am going to try to



bring his memory back to those sweet old days and help him to return to the strength and manhood of the old times. If you wish to help me you must not look at him with pity or disgust, but with love and consolation. Can you do so?"

Job's head was bent sideways and his face wore an expression of undisguised astonishment. Such a lesson he had never been called upon to learn. He could utter the most unqualified praise when his admiration and respect were excited. But to treat him with forbearance and to manifest love for him in expression and manner was a surprising request.

"Can *you* really love him, Mrs. Holmes?"

"I love him! Does Christ love you, Job?"

Job hung his head. His impulsive, passionate little heart, his hands lifted so often to fight, his feet that had gone on so many mischievous errands—his whole sinful self was dear to the sinless, perfect Christ. He saw immediately how long-suffering human beings should act toward one another. Looking up he said:

"It kind o' seems now—doesn't it?—as if we never ought to give a sinner up. But, Mrs. Holmes," and Job rubbed his hair all awry in



his perplexity, "it takes all the faith I have to believe that God can save—drunkards. Now I am going to try real hard to do as you say, and if I look kind o' pityin' and ashamed of him you must let me know."

The lady, so accustomed to face the bitter knowledge of her husband's disgrace, did not flinch at the untaught boy's bluntness, but smiling gently and even hopefully, replied:

"Have patience and hope, and the time will come when you will have no occasion to pity this man. Now go to bed."

Left alone with the sleeping victim of strong drink, her thoughts wandered to a sunny past when life was love and honor seemed assured. She saw her husband the center of brilliant rooms; her infant boy, with the world spread out from which to choose; herself protected and beloved. She recalled those times of well-nigh fatal sickness to her husband, and when, to restore him, she herself had mixed liquor and presented it to his lips. One by one she recalled those days in which his need for something strengthening seemed to increase, until at length the decanter was always at hand and his breath always redolent of liquor. Next in the solemn, silent procession of mistaken



deeds passed that awful night that came on in peace and happiness and ended in bitterness and tears. That night revealed the dark brown eyes bleared and irresponsible; the keen, quick mind shaken on its throne; the helpful hands, powerless and tremulous; the voice, that had never once failed in kindness, wailing in the agonies of *delirium tremens*. If some other means had been devised to bring him up from the valley of the shadow of death; if he had only laid his proud head low in the glory of his manhood, before it was so crowned with groveling shame; if only — She looked, with a reproachful conscience, on the wreck before her and sent up a prayer for help to lead him gently back to self-reliance and soul-health.

Boys and girls, there are three parts to each one of us: this body, provided by our heavenly Father with exquisite senses to feel and taste, hear and see, and thrill with all that is beautiful; these minds, to see farther than our eyes can see, and take hold of that mysterious something we call knowledge; these souls, that impel us toward God and, if taught aright, curb us when we would do with our bodies or our minds that which is debasing. How we



should shudder and examine ourselves when we see men, women, or children committing that which will bring them to ruin. Tempted as they have been, we would, perhaps, have done the same. We are to so live that when in danger we can cling to Christ and find deliverance through his aid.

Were you ever brought into daily contact with a drunkard? If so, young as you are, you know that the effort to reform is a thousand fold more difficult than the most abandoned fall had been. Poor Mrs. Holmes! she took up her burden bravely, but, if her patient soul could have foreseen all, she would have paused.

When, the next morning, her husband awoke he was gloomy, discouraged, and silent. He sat before the fire with his face bowed in his hands the greater part of the day. Sometimes his eyes looked so hungry and wild that his wife was afraid of him. But there were her little school to care for, her house to look after, and a long letter to write to her son; so she dared not yield to her fear, and had not even time to shed the tears that trembled in her eyes. Like many another mother, out of the midst of her sadness she wrote a happy



letter to George, one that sent him laughing into Ben's room to tell the latter "how gay mother is becoming."

She kept her husband out of sight as much as possible the first week. Then, his face having lost something of its wildness, she coaxed him out into the school-room one sunny afternoon. When his tall form appeared in the door, there was a perfect hush among the little ones and the larger boys and girls. Job looked up from his books, and as his inquisitive eyes scanned the object of his abhorrence he could hardly believe what he saw. A clean shirt, whole garments, and hair neatly dressed, can change any one. Job thought that if those lines in the severe face were not quite so deep, and if the great melancholy eyes could brighten with a smile, there would be something to love in the silent man.

As Mr. Holmes's eyes wandered over the innocent faces and then turned to the countenance of his wife, whose heart was beating over the possible results of this visit to the school-room, they bore a puzzled look. He passed his hand across his brow, and then glanced inquiringly into the faces of the smallest present. At length, and while the room was so quiet that



you could have heard a pin drop, he looked down with fear and sorrow and asked:

“Where is *our* boy, our little George?”

Memory had at last returned.

Mrs. Holmes pressed her hand upon her heart, it beat so rapidly with joy and excitement, as she replied:

“George is away from home.”

The answer seemed to satisfy him for a moment, and then, a disappointed look crossing his face, he continued:

“How soon is he coming back?”

“I did not set a time.”

“Send for him, then. I want to see him. Here,” motioning to Job. Job came forward, and the father, struggling with recollections that now seemed flooding his soul, said excitedly, “Go for George immediately and tell him that his father wants to see him.”

Job looked at Mrs. Holmes in confusion, but the latter smilingly said,

“We shall have to write for George. He is nearly a hundred miles away.”

“I will write,” said the father, with all the tremulousness and eagerness of a sick child.

“He must come right home.”

Catching hold of a door-post to steady him-



self, for he was very weak now that he was from under the influence of liquor, he drew himself out of the door into the little parlor, and sank exhausted into a chair.

“I must have something to strengthen me, Miriam.”

She brought him a cup of strong coffee which she kept always ready for such demands, which were frequent. But he pushed it away with—

“Something stronger than that, Miriam. I shall die, I am so weak.”

She stood motionless and silent, hoping that the burning thirst for liquor would pass off.

He attempted to rise as he saw that she made no effort to grant his request, and a wild look again took possession of his eyes.

“Miriam, I will have whisky. Where do you keep your liquor?”

“George,” she expostulated, and, grasping his two arms, she endeavored to gently force him back into his chair. “My husband, you might better die than taste liquor again.”

A passionate anger suddenly seized him. He wrenched his arm from her grasp, and lifting it, forcibly brought down his clenched fist upon her upturned brow, saying:









A Tragic Scene.



“Will you bring me whisky—wh-i-sky?” and he prolonged the last word as if he were tasting the coveted beverage.

With one low, grieving cry she tottered; her other hand relaxed, and she fell senseless to the floor.

The noise brought little eyes to the key-hole, and Job, who had been living with Mrs. Holmes for a month, and therefore felt a right to the house, thrust the curious children aside, and, opening the door, rushed in. His affectionate nature comprehending at once the state of the case, his indignation knew no bounds. His keen eyes flashing, his little hands clenched, he cried out:

“You have killed her! You have killed her!”

The wretched man—his longing having disappeared with his blow—stood as if dazed, and made no effort to move. As Job spoke he looked at the boy with absolute fear, and then, falling back into his chair, began to cry pitiously.

The children were all in the room by this time. They stood in a circle around their teacher, and down their frightened little faces rolled the tears. Job, feeling that every thing devolved upon him, asked the five or six of his



own age to help him lift Mrs. Holmes to the bed.

“Be careful, children, she is tired out, poor thing—and hurt. If you should let her fall—” Job stooped, and, turning her head, revealed her bleeding forehead to the children. A simultaneous cry broke out. Down upon the patient, weary forehead fell Job’s tears. Never were hands and feet bedewed with truer or more loving emotion than that which moistened the hands and feet that the children held as the older of their number carefully lifted Mrs. Holmes and bore her to her bed. Then, with solemnity, Job sent the others home. Returning to his pale and silent friend he carefully bathed the wound, and fastened a cool bandage around the brow. Mrs. Holmes made not the slightest stir while he was doing this. After awhile, and when he was chafing the cold hands, he paused, suddenly impressed with the quiet that every-where reigned in the house. The hum from the street, deadened by the closed doors and windows, seemed far away and even added to the hush.

“What if Mrs. Holmes should never waken!” Job had seen men and women in long swoons more than once during his life in the streets.



But there were others to care for them, and he was but a looker on. He did wish that the tired eyelids would lift and the well-known smile shine out. He passed his hand caressingly down the patient's cheek. It was so cold. The mouth was partly open. "I will close it," and the little boy gently pressed the chin. The lips touched, and then slowly, slowly parted, and gradually settled a little apart. The tightness that had been about the eyes now began to lessen, and the long lashes to brush lightly the pale cheeks below them.

"She feels easier," murmured Job, and again he took her hand to chafe it into warmth. It was even colder than before.

Seized now with awful fear, he paused, and, remembering that he had seen physicians bend the ear to the breast, he laid his head upon the heart that had so often beat with loving throbs for others. There was not a flutter; there was not a movement of the clothing. How still; how very still! Job lifted up his head and placed his ear upon the open lips. There was not the slightest sound. His tears came in floods. "She cannot be dead!" and he put his mouth to the icy ear and begged for a word. It seemed to him, as



he looked at her face for an answer, that there was a smile there, and he called again, momentarily ceasing his tears. But the smile was only that which I think God not unfrequently wreathes about the lips of those who have caught glimpses of the sun of eternity shining on the hills of Heaven. That voice was not to speak again ; those eyes had bade their last good-night to the little school ; the hands that had ached under the work they did were forever at rest ; the heart that had centered itself on the redemption of a wanderer was broken. Job was again friendless. George Holmes was motherless.



## VIII.

## A MYSTERIOUS PROVIDENCE.

WHEN the boy at length realized that he was alone with the dead, and with a man well-nigh insane, he was for a time bewildered. His first thought was of George, and that he must be sent for. But he dare not leave the house to go in quest of any one, and he had never had any communication with the families down stairs. Perhaps some one would come in. Mrs. Holmes had had many callers of late. So he sat down again by the bedside, feeling that there was no place so dear now in the world to him. The hours passed. The street lamps were lighted. The husband still sat in his chair. No one came.

“I must write to George,” said Job as he lighted the gas. He no longer felt afraid. His fear, indeed, had been the fear of sorrow. But how to tell George the sad story Job did not know. It had not been long that he had



been able to write, and he was a blunt boy at his best. The news would have to go on its errand sharp-cut, biting.

He drew a little table up beside the bed and carefully placed upon it his writing materials. As he sat down he glanced through his tears at the silent one. Her arms had fallen from her bosom, and, extended on the bed, they looked tired. "I can do it for you," murmured Job, and he began his task.

"DEAR GEORGE: Youre mother wants you to come home. Youre father is here. Perhaps I ought ter say that youre mother cant set up. George, I mite as well tell you first as last, youre poor mother is dede and ther is no one yet to look after her but me. Pleas come as fast as you can.

"Your fatheful frende, JOB."

Job read his letter over and over, trying to find out what was the matter with it. That it did not read like the letters George had sent home he knew full well. But his mind, fatigued now with the weight of care that had been pressing upon it the last few hours, could frame nothing better. So at length putting



the message into an envelope, which he directed in crude, immense letters, he went softly down stairs, and, going to the corner, deposited his message in the little box.

There was nothing to do now but to wait. He looked into the adjoining room. The husband had lain down on the sofa and was asleep. Job took his seat again beside the bed, and throughout the long night he sat there, occasionally falling into a fitful slumber disturbed by the scenes of the afternoon, which mingled confusedly with his dreams of selling the morning papers. There was one less boy the next day to go through the cars and to stand on the corners earning his daily bread. When the school children came, at nine o'clock, Job met the younger ones and sent them to their homes not to return for a week. They went their way submissively, but the older ones insisted on knowing all. So over and over he had to tell his pitiful story. So soon as one of the older boys arrived Job sent him for Aunt Winifred, who had been an almost daily visitor at the little school. She was out when he arrived, and so it was nearly noon before she reached the lonely house,



Mr. Holmes, meanwhile, had wakened from his slumber. His mind was confused, yet it had a sense of something wrong. Ever since he had returned to his wife he had alternated between days of perfect sanity in which his soul was agonized with remorse, and days when he seemed hardly responsible for what he said or did. He tried in vain on that morning to recall any fact of the preceding day. It was a blank. He began after awhile to wonder in a dull way why his wife did not come to him as was her wont. He was hungry. After waiting what seemed an endless time he rose, dressed himself, and, sullen and revengeful, left his bedroom and went into the dining-room, where he found no cheerful breakfast-table, not even a fire in the grate.

Job came in presently with a pale, swollen face, his arms filled with kindling-wood. Something about the boy made Mr. Holmes regard him steadfastly. He passed his hand across his brow confusedly, and then, his act of the preceding day seeming for the first time to come to him with any force, he asked Job, "Did I hurt my wife?"

Job's honest eyes flashed angrily for a minute. Then he remembered the unwavering



love the patient wife had shown; his heart well-nigh bursting over her cruel death, and yet at the same time filled with pity for her sake for the drunkard. He replied, but gently,

“Yes, you hurt her.”

“Where is she?” after a pause.

Job slowly laid his kindlings down, rose, brushed the wood-dust from his clothing, and then, seeing that there was nothing else he could do before answering, he said, pointing to the room, “In there.”

Mr. Holmes followed the direction of the fingerless hand and slowly walked toward the door. He paused on the threshold, seized with an undefinable fear. Then he opened the door, closed it softly after him, and looked around. He thought, in a queer kind of a way, that every thing looked very cold and neat. His eyes at last sought the bed. There she lay! How straight! How quiet! How unruffled her pillow! Outside the covering, and the room so cold and the sash wide open. He walked across the room and closed the window, and then approached the bed, his face gradually yet surely gaining an expression of fearful intelligence.

How tenderly, O how tenderly he lifted the



stiffened hand, and in the tones of long ago whispered, "Miriam." There was, indeed, no color in her cheek, but then it was always pale, and the room was so icy that his teeth chattered. "Miriam, wake up!" and he laid his face against hers. He sprang up then with a groan. It was a lifeless face. And there on the quiet forehead, with its serene brows drooping as if they had ached for years with the pressure of unshed tears, was the wound that had released the longing soul.

He bowed his head upon the silent breast that bore uncomplainingly this last burden of all the long sad years, and wept in uncontrollable and remorseful anguish.

Liquor! Liquor had done it all. Liquor had made him a murderer, and of her whose image had remained undimmed in his memory when the recollections of child and honor had faded like a dream. He himself had severed the last link that bound him to the pure and good. With an awful cry for help and pardon, a cry that made Job stand still in horror in the adjoining room, he called in the most piteous and tender tones: "Miriam, my wife, my dear wife, Miriam, wake up, wake up!" And the only answer, the reproach of



the solemn stillness of death, cut through his heart like cold steel.

His paroxysm spent itself after awhile, but left him rational. There was a wild, awful dread about that room, and the vengeance he had wrecked on himself was past enduring.

All of his life now spread before him like a panorama of brilliant colors. The scenes of his boyhood, his early married life, his infant boy, and the orgies, the wanderings, the desolation of the succeeding years, seemed to stand out on the canvas of his imagination, and each one to reproach him with the word, "Murder!"

Where was his boy? When would he come? Would he notice the father whom he had never known? Turn his thoughts which way he would there was nothing for him but agony.

So he sat there three weary, endless hours, slowly dragging their weary rounds. There was no sound save his own stifled moans until the door-knob was softly turned and the door gently opened.

The wretched man lifted his eyes and saw before him a kind, serene, yet horrified face. There stood Aunt Winifred—the tragical



story as told by a trembling, frightened child nerving her to meet a man who had killed his wife.

As he lifted his eyes and saw the oval face crowned by soft black hair, regarding him, notwithstanding the horrified fear, with pity, he rose with an unutterable longing for a word of sympathy from some kindly human soul.

Methinks that those who, in the hidden future, find themselves in that dread place called hell, will experience the greatest of all woes in the separation from those who are purified from temptation even. Misery is lightened here on earth by the thought that the darkest cloud has a silver lining, that the sun must shine, that summer is only a few months behind winter, that hope lives with life, that God is merciful.

As he sat there so long alone with the dead it had seemed as though earth were transformed into an awful place of divine retribution. The sweet Christian face of Aunt Winifred came like a dove of peace, and all of the good impulses of his fallen nature reached out instinctively.

She approached the bed, took a chair beside it, and contemplated, with deep emotion, all



that was left of the mother and wife who had lived such an intense, sad life.

"I killed her!" said Mr. Holmes in hollow, remorseful tones. "*I* killed her!"

"The Jews killed Christ, and he said, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' And God says that 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,'" said Aunt Winifred.

"My sin is dyed too deep. A blood-stain it is, and it never can be washed out. Why, the stains in Holyrood Abbey of Rizzio's blood are there yet, and he was murdered two hundred years ago. My wife's blood has crimsoned my conscience, and it will remain fresh there forever and forever. I beg of you to give me over to the law, to force me to the sharpest misery. I am a murderer! a *murderer*!" and his face paled to a ghastlier whiteness as he repeated the awful word.

Aunt Winifred saw that he was on the verge of insanity.

"I want to prepare your wife for her burial. Leave me alone with her for awhile. You want that all should be done decently and in order for one whom you loved, do you not?"

"Yes, yes!"



She lost all fear of him, he seemed so beseeching and helpless. Seeing him totter, she took his arm in her firm grasp, and led him to an eastern room into which the bright spring sunshine came flooding.

"There, sit here and pray to God. He is a God of peace and mercy, and he will surely forgive if you honestly repent."

She returned to the darkened room and prepared the remains for burial, shedding tears for Job, who, now that his work seemed done, had crouched beside the grate and was making vain efforts to suppress his tears.

The childish letter had, meanwhile, reached its destination. A telegram would have been less harsh in its effect. Somehow we expect in a letter a preparation for sad news. Telegrams, where one is not expecting to receive them, are a foreboding before they are even opened; one has time while holding the yellow envelope to nerve himself for the worst. Aunt Winifred, learning that Job had mailed his letter the night before, and knowing that it would reach its destination before a dispatch could, saw that there was nothing else for her to do but to receive George as tenderly as possible when he should come.



It was a sunny morning. Although the trees were naked, yet their long arms, softened by the golden light and swaying idly back and forth in the spring breeze, seemed to whisper of coming leaves and blossoms, of deep blue skies and grassy fields, of a whole summer of warmth and glow.

George sat by his open window with his astronomy before him, and on his table quite a display of geometrical figures, prominent among which were circles. The night before he had been up till late, studying the stars. This morning he was working out his observations.

As his eye took in the sweep of the horizon and the curving proportions of all things looked at from a distance, and then fell upon those circles on the table, he thought of God, whose existence, like their circumference, had neither beginning nor end. "His days go on, his days go on," he murmured, as the burden of *De Profundis* floated through his mind. "Now if I only had Ben's faith and love for the God he believes in, how happy I should be in the thought that the Creator is so boundless in his existence." On the night of the Christmas party at Mr. Winthrop's, while tell-



ing the children stories, he had felt sad because the truths that he presented so ably to them fell upon his soul like some old, old story grown stale through repetition. All through his college life he had felt the want of something. His character, in the estimation of faculty and students, was just as good as Ben's, his generosity and stanch support of correct principles just as decided. But when his principles were ridiculed, while his grit and strong will kept him firm, there was every time in his secret soul some such question arising as, "Does it pay?" He felt that there would come a day when the habits taught him by his mother would wear away under the friction of opposition, unless they were founded on an authority higher than any human opinion or natural good tendencies. Thus far his love for his mother had been like a pillar of fire by night and a cloudy pillar by day. What if she should be taken away and he be left utterly alone in the world to achieve the fortune and name to which he aspired, and, at the same time, keep his soul unspotted and the sanctuary of all noble and lofty impulses.

"Could he do it?"

"No!"



George had what is the rarest of all elements in our weak human nature, that is, honesty in judgment of self.

A shudder seemed to creep over the bright sunshine, although there was no cloud in the sky, while before him rose visions as real as though tangible as the books and furniture around him. The honors clustering about a law case brilliantly won, the *eclat* investing a judge's chair, the praise that echoes through the press of a nation over a political victory, the weight of conclusive eloquence dropping from his lips in the Senate of his country, were probabilities that he had determined should prove realities.

While climbing up the long ascent, would he never pause to gather the emoluments that come to covert and dishonest dealing in fees, riches, and position? Would he not set utterly aside his opinions of right and wrong should they stand, like a mountain, in the road to his ambition? Now, a boy at college, and his best friend animated by a lofty Christian principle, he might; but then—George trembled. In the ardor of his thoughts he rose.

There was a knock at the door, and instantly



after Ben's face was thrust in and then his whole body.

"Letters for both of us this morning. What new correspondence have you been contracting?" holding up Job's letter with its sprawling, irregular writing.

George laughed as he glanced at the envelope, and was so much amused that he forgot for an instant to look within. "From New York," he said finally, and then, while his face was still wreathed in smiles, he tore it open.

"It ought to bring you down from the clouds, where you evidently were when I entered," said Ben, as George's eyes lighted on the short, blunt missive.

An ashy paleness crept about his lips. The letter dropped from his hands. "Ben, O Ben, I have lost every thing; I have lost my mother."

He turned around. He was not the boy to weep or make a demonstration. He just stood there beside the open window while his eyes took in every little detail in the view before him as if they must be noticed for life or death.

Neither was Ben a boy for words. The sorrow came home to him also, for George's mother was a woman that every manly boy



would admire and love. Irrespective of Mrs. Holmes, Ben loved George warmly, and he longed to comfort him. But he did not know how.

The silence of loving hearts, the voiceless attention to our wishes, is often more soothing than the kindest words. George felt so, when, turning at length, his gaze met Ben's large, expressive eyes, full of tenderness and sympathy.

"Ben, I wish I had your religion. I feel savage with grief and disappointment, and I see no help out of the darkness."

"George, pray. I will pray for you. 'God watch between us while we are absent one from another.'"

Ben asked George what he needed before starting home, and then, making the necessary preparations for a friend who had just set his feet into deep waters, he accompanied him to the train, and bade him as affectionate a "God-speed" as one boy ever bestowed upon another.

Job answered George's ring. The latter, moved by the boy's sad face, and feeling the touch of sympathy, stooped and kissed him.

Mrs. Winthrop, though George was tall and manly, received him like a mother, and broke



down all the reserve with which he had been trying to steel his heart. It was she who related, in as softened and delicate a manner as possible, the fact that the father, toward whom he had always felt revengeful, was the cause of his mother's death, and was at that moment in the house.

George sprang up defiant, his eyes flashing. "He shall not stay under this roof another minute! He has been a curse to my whole life. It is unjust. God is cruel to me," he cried, his belief in some kind of a divine power finding utterance. "See me," he continued, "how thin I am. I have worked until my brain seemed bursting. I have denied myself the pleasures of other boys of my age, and I have done it cheerfully whenever I thought of my mother, my one consolation in life. I cannot love, much less respect, the man who forced me to this and my mother to the life of a slave," he continued, when Mrs. Winthrop endeavored to interrupt him. "He is a brute, and he must accept the lot that he has carved out for himself."

"George, George, be quiet, till I tell you that your mother told me that, could she feel sure that her husband would rise from his



ruin, she could die happy. You must finish the work she began. You have a proud spirit, a rebellious spirit, my boy, and, unless it is curbed, greater grief still awaits you. I do not wish to chide. God knows my heart aches for you! But God is good, is merciful; and even the disgrace and sorrow under which you writhe may be his kindest blessings for you and those that you need. Your father is your father, do what you may to disown him, and you are in nature like him whose existence seems to you a curse. George, my boy, look upon him as yourself gone astray. For the sake of your mother, love him, care for him, and raise him with yourself. Consider that the physician immediately pronounced him in such a state as to be irresponsible for the deed he has committed. The coroner's verdict frees him from criminality."

"Have you ever hated, Mrs. Winthrop?"

"No," she answered, surprised and startled at his tone.

"I hate my father. I hate him with as much hatred as I love my mother." He clenched his hands.

"What will you do, George, now that your mother is dead?"



“Do?” and his hands dropped despondently. “I would like to die and be with her, and away from this unsatisfying life. It has been nothing but sorrow and disappointment.”

The anger had momentarily faded from his expressive face, leaving it worn and sad in the extreme.

“It seems to me that I see the work that God’s own finger is writing this moment on your destiny. He has called away the one on whom you would have lavished the world, were it in your possession, and has left, without another person on whom he has a claim, your father to you.

“Your father is the victim of the crying sin of our country. You have been aspiring to political honors. Be one of those brave souls that the women need among men, and, through these years of your minority, study the aspects of a question that sooner or later will give rise to a new party. From books, the streets, hospitals, and your father seek to learn the properties of liquor, its myriad influences, and the nature of laws necessary to lift the curse under which America to-day is groaning. You and Ben and Bentie have longed to find your work and do it. Yours meets you all the



way, and then you flash defiance in God's face. What if God needs you, George? What if, proving unfaithful to his call, at the last great day you shall meet the reproach of your mother, the eternal ruin of your father, and the sentence of your Maker, 'You knew your duty and you did it not?' What if, doing your duty by your fellow-men in this trying particular, you shall enter Heaven the leader of a countless procession of souls redeemed through your instrumentality? Freedom under law, harmony, Christianity, are the watch-words of the ideal statesman. Prove yourself equal to the emergencies of your position by adopting them as your motto."

Mrs. Winthrop's voice was tremulous with her earnestness. Its sweet, impressive tones thrilled the listening boy.

"If I could know that there is a heaven. If I could know that there is a God who concerns himself with what we do, there might be some hope."

"Act now, act always, as if there were. Study God's dealings with you, and study yourself as if you were another person. The twilight will soon dawn, and then will come the glorious noonday of certainty."



This appeal reached him. It was new to him, and yet in a line with previous estimates he had brought to bear upon himself when comparing and judging of his rank as a scholar and of his moral character.


“Now George,” she continued, finding that she had at length reached his judgment, “I want you to promise me, as your mother’s nearest friend, and because I know that she would ask the same, could she speak, that you will be resigned in manner if not in heart, and receive your father as a son should do. I want you to promise, also, that you will try to exercise faith in God, who, I know, is kind and just, and makes all things work together for good to those who love him.”

She had taken his hands, and, while holding them in her firm, gentle grasp, asked him so earnestly, that, longing all the time to believe as she did, he promised.



## IX.

## AN EXPERIMENT.

N Sixth Avenue is a fancy store, where are sold work-baskets, German toys, ribbons, Milton jewelry, ready-made hats—in fact, every thing that could possibly come under the head of “notions.”

It is the month of March, the day for several spring openings. This fancy store, in common with some of the large Broadway establishments, has put on its best dress, thrown open its doors, and, to all intents and purposes, sung the song beginning, “Will you walk into my parlor, said the spider to the fly?”

The dispensers of all this assortment of what-nots are a short, fat, roly-poly man and a boy. The man, though quite important after his style, does not begin to compare in general volume of manners with the boy, who is four feet six inches in height, quite stout, with pink cheeks, blue eyes, and hair parted in the middle. The boy presents to customers a



formidable expanse of shirt bosom, and also displays on his person a blue tie whose long ends are pulled through a ring, enormous cuff-buttons, and immaculate boots.

It is about half-past eight in the morning. The boy is lightly skipping around the two long, narrow counters and down the aisle between them, brandishing, here and there, a feather-duster. He occasionally pauses before quite a lengthy mirror filling up a small recess, in order to adjust the ring on his neck-tie, as it is inclined to slip. He finds it necessary, moreover, to frequently smooth down the stray hairs which the feather-duster from time to time sets in motion. He does it, however, without the slightest reluctance, and every time he turns from the mirror he looks more self-satisfied than before.

The tide that sweeps down the avenue drops, now and then, a wave at the notion-store; then the dexterity and address with which the boy displays handkerchiefs, ties, jewelry, and toys, is a sight worth seeing.

While he is selling and others are buying I will call to your remembrance a small youth, named Charley, whom his mother, wishing him to have every educational advantage,



brought to New York and placed in the grammar-school that Trot attended.

Charley might have been seen for the space of a month with Trot for a not infrequent companion, daily pursuing his way to school with book-strap in one hand and lunch-box in the other. But as soon as the novelty of the new books and the new school wore off, he acted as much out of his element as a boy well could.

Night after night, unless his mother absolutely refused to listen, he appeared before her with most harrowing stories of long lessons, severe teachers, and slights, and with petitions to go to this place or that. Like many another boy who had gone to the city, Charley had to get acclimated. One would have thought his life limited to three days, and that in these three days he was obliged to compress all that was to be seen or heard in New York. To have heard him tell of where he had been one would have thought him ubiquitous. He seemed to be transformed. He was not at all the quiet, trusting, modest little Charley of a year before. He had not only grown out of most of his clothes of that period, but out of most of his common sense.



His mother was as much perplexed about him as a hen over chickens that will go into the water. At last, in despair over his oft-repeated complaints, his dilatoriness in study, his propensity to wander, and his sighs to do as so many other boys, "nice ones," of his age did—go into business—led her to conclude that perhaps the best thing for him at present was to remove him from school. Boys and girls who dislike school are obstacles dreaded by teachers, and they are a torment to their parents. So, with Mr. Stanton's and Mr. Winthrop's aid, she quietly sought for Charley a position in a store, and one night, when his woes were more voluminous than usual, told him that he need not return to school the next day, but must then begin as clerk in a notion-store.

At the time this chapter opens he had been for some time performing his new duties, and, with one exception, they seemed to fill the measure of his ambition. As a boy who was not obliged to work for his living, he felt it altogether beneath his dignity on cold winter and raw spring mornings to rise when only the laboring portion of the city was astir, eat his breakfast alone, and go down town to the



work of taking down shutters, attending to fires, and, in fact, doing what seemed much on a par with that which chambermaids in private houses busy themselves with. But, then, he was in business. This thought invariably led him to stand up so straight that he bent backward, to hold his chin just a little higher, and to indulge in a drop or two more of perfume. He not only musked his clothing, but he ate musk-drops to give his breath a pleasant odor.

If you ask me why his mother allowed him to be so silly, I can only say that, when Charley had scarlet fever, measles, and chicken-pox, she found the surest and safest remedy for those diseases was to bring them as soon as possible to the surface. She discovered, a little too late, or she would certainly not have gone to the expense of taking him to New York, that he had to be afflicted with still another infantile disease, a species of insane desire to become a man and act a man while he was still an inexperienced and ignorant boy. Her experience led her to treat this malady in the same way she had his other childish complaints. She, therefore, placed him where he would come in contact with real men, meet



with rebuffs, and eventually come to a knowledge of all true success through comparing his incapacity and ignorance with the capacity and wisdom of mature business people.

On the March day in question, Charley, having finished his dusting, and being more than satisfied with his appearance, as revealed by the conveniently arranged mirror, devoted himself with so much deftness to customers and sold so many goods that his master congratulated him on his prospects for a mercantile career in the "notion" line, and asked his advice as to the expediency of buying a contemplated bill of goods.

This was sufficient to lead the embryo merchant prince to the conclusion that his success was already achieved, and to instantly assume arrogant airs of authority and ownership exceedingly impressive upon all small customers, excepting one, who toward noon made her appearance.

She was a slender, graceful little damsel of eight years, remarkable, at first sight, for a pair of very keen eyes that saw every thing at a glance. They immediately fell upon Charley, who stood, hands in his pocket, leaning against the counter, and looking, in his atti-



tude, as if he were all shirt-bosom and blue neck-tie.

"Good-morning," said Charley as he bowed with quite a grand flourish of his smoothly combed head.

The customer returned his salute with something of a wondering look, and said rather curtly,

"Don't act so, Charley."

"How?" and the young shop-keeper raised his faintly outlined eyebrows.

"O, I wish you wouldn't put on; you don't seem a bit natural."

Charley began to whistle, and then, after finishing his tune, said, with infinite condescension, "I can't always be a little boy, Trot."

"Well, you are one yet; you are only twelve years old, if you are tall and in a store. My mother says, she does, I heard her tell papa so," she continued, "that your mother put you in a store to punish you for your nonsense. You will get tired of it after awhile, and then you'll see."

Having delivered her verdict, she looked askance at Charley.

The roly-poly man, who had overheard the conversation, laughed till his fat sides were in



a quiver, and, rubbing his hands together, said: "That's the little girl to take a young gentleman's pride down. Give him some more advice."

Trot, who had been born with a mania for giving people advice, needed no more urging.

"Every body is laughing at you for your airs, Charley. Your mother says that you will have to stay here till you get so tired of selling notions"—Trot prolonged the words with such effect that the fat man laughed louder than ever—"that you will do any thing to stop."

"I never shall get tired," said Charley stoutly.

"Yes, you will," sagely retorted Trot, "when all the little boys of your age [*"little"* aggravatingly emphasized] are big and know enough to go to college, you will be an ignoramus, and fit for nothing else but to sell notions. Then you will be sorry. I came around to show you the prize I received for spelling," she said, naively changing the subject. "I have been promoted. My teacher says that in two years, if I keep on as I have begun, I can leave the primary department. Then I will



be ahead of you," and the blue eyes snapped triumphantly.

Somehow the gay neck-tie wore a limp appearance, and Charley's egotism was replaced by a crest-fallen rosy look at the close of Trot's tirade, that gave the "notion" business quite a different aspect.

His mother had so carefully refrained from any persuasion and reproofs and avoided even the mention of books, that Charley, although knowing that she in the beginning had placed him in the store because he was dissatisfied, supposed that it was also because she really believed all of his fault-finding reports.

Trot's version threw a new light upon the subject. He suddenly saw the rosy clouds that had invested his winter's work with so much boyish romance fade, and when she, having bought some needles and thread, disappeared with quite a superior nod of her flaxen head, he looked around the store with a feeling that it was not, after all, the most important place in New York, and he, a boy on the high road to success.

Yet it must not be denied that he had a real fondness for buying and selling. Had it come somewhat later, his mother would have



encouraged his ambitions. But she knew that in this age of general intelligence business men, to stand prominently among other men, need a larger amount of book-knowledge than did their ancestors. As Charley was her only son, and, therefore, the one on whom all her future hopes were placed, she was deeply pained at what seemed a constitutional aversion to books and study. She accordingly decided to put him into a store, hoping that the time would come when pride, if nothing else, would drive him to a few years of close application to books.

He kept Trot's reproof to himself for several weeks, but it bore its fruits. He began to feel, now that his suspicions were aroused, that his mother never read to him any more because she did not think he knew enough to appreciate her efforts. He fidgeted, colored, and gave the most confused answers when Mr. Winthrop asked him what he thought of prices. One evening, while dining with his mother at Mr. Stanton's, when that gentleman asked him if he had a good supply of work-baskets on hand, he surprised every body by pouring forth a sudden and angry torrent of tears, thereby quite disfiguring his radiant



neck-tie and making little canals down his rosy cheeks.

"Why, why, Charley, are work-baskets so pathetic a subject as to make you cry?" said Mr. Stanton, much surprised at this unexpected outburst.

Just at that moment his eye, by chance, fell upon Trot, who sat behind her plate, erect as a little Puritan, her mouth pursed into an expression of conscious superiority, her eyes fixed on Charley in triumphant condemnation.

"Trot, do you know any thing about this?"

"Perhaps I do," she replied, in sententious wisdom.

"Tell me all."

"Charley puts on so many airs, that I just told him one day what we all thought of him."

"We!"

"Yes, I told him that he was an ignoramus, and so he is."

Charley's sobs redoubled at this verdict. Mr. Stanton, with difficulty suppressing a smile, and not looking at Trot, said to Charley, "Go to the library and bring me a small ruler that you will find on my desk."



While wiping his eyes and sobbing by turns, he performed the errand, wondering meanwhile what Mr. Stanton proposed to do. Returning, he handed the ruler to Trot's father, who, calling the little girl to his side, said gravely:

"My daughter, you are quite too small to tell other people of their faults, and you are a naughty girl for going from home and reporting what you hear there. You have been such a little ignoramus yourself, that I shall have to whip you."

Trot looked up pleadingly, her blue eyes suffused with tears. But her father was firm. Down came the ruler on the little hand, one, two, three, four, five, six times, and then, her pride breaking down, she wept as unrestrainedly as Charley.

"Now go and ask Charley's forgiveness."

Not daring to disobey, she went up to his side and asked, quite humbly, "Charley, please forgive me."

A laughable reconciliation, which is hardly necessary to describe, ensued, and finally, good-humor being restored, the dinner proceeded without further interruption.

Charley, however, felt all the time, down in



the depths of his heart, that he had gotten at the actual state of his affairs through Trot's revelation. And although he said nothing, his new thoughts and mortification were working a change, the nature of which will be revealed in our next volume.



## X.

## THE SHOP-GIRL.

BENTIE had come home for her summer vacation in excellent health, her rooming with Adah having been the only disheartening lesson that she had learned. Her father, wishing to make the summer as conducive to her general improvement as her year at college had been, consulted with Aunt Winifred, and they finally decided to have Bentie see life at a fashionable watering-place.

"How do you fancy the idea, daughter?" asked Mr. Winthrop.

"I like it, papa. I want change and variety." She mused a few minutes, and then, suddenly looking up, said, "Cannot you and I, auntie, go alone to some place where nobody will know me, even if you should be recognized? I have another problem to solve," she laughingly continued, her aunt appearing puzzled. "I have been complimented and petted all my life because I am Bentie Winthrop. Now,



while we are gone, suppose you call me by my middle names—Claribel Elton—and that I satisfy myself with my plain college wardrobe.”

Bentie’s design was to find out how much of the attention she received was due to her position in society and to her fine clothing. It was a somewhat strange notion, but having once thought of it she determined to put it into practice if she could get the consent of her father and of her Aunt Winifred.

It was finally agreed that she appear in the plainest apparel, and be known as “Claribel Elton,” and let people draw what inferences they pleased. That some afterward mistook her for a shop-girl whom Mrs. Rutherford had kindly taken with her for a vacation was not part of the original plan. It was only one of the “inferences” of the situation.

We cannot, however, approve of deception in any form, and we think that in this instance Bentie made a mistake. She ought not to have designed to pass for what she was not; for though she said not a word she acted a deceitful part, and that is always wrong. She suffered for it, too, as we shall presently see.



Bentie had more of a trial before her than she well understood. But her summer experience taught her a lesson of which before she really had only a remote conception, and it was that, in most cases, adversity shows a man, woman, or child, the difference between true and false friendship.

Bentie had been at Stapleton a week, and had grown so accustomed to the new state of affairs that she felt no fear of betraying herself. Fortunately, also, for her scheme, there were no families at any of the hotels whom she had ever met before.

Claribel's *début*, as Aunt Winifred intended, was entirely unaffected and perfectly simple. The evening of their arrival was a wet one, and the next morning revealed sodden, heavy clouds hanging low over the landscape and shutting out every thing but the few feet of turf in front of the hotel. The sea air took all of the curl, and it seemed to Claribel all of the color, from her shining auburn hair. There was an incipient fever sore appearing on the side of her nose, and, try as she would, her ruffles looked limp, her skirts hung closely about her slender figure, her rich coil of hair fell darkly on one side. Aunt Winifred, how-



ever, cheered her by telling her that she was really a plain-looking girl. With this assurance she followed the compact, stately form of her chaperon into the large dining-room.

Mrs. Rutherford, with her gray curls, which were just then so fashionable, and her plain but rich black silk, was an elegant-looking woman, and commanded attention. But Bentie, in her simple cambric, her merry eyes subdued, and her nose aglow with the lurking sore, could readily have been taken for the elder lady's "companion."

Thus she found her place. Once in it, everybody, to the best of his or her ability, helped her to keep it.

It is doubtful whether all of her determination and independence would have been a match for her mortification and loneliness, had not the thought of her father and the "problem" held her steadfast. More than once she went to her wardrobe to contemplate two or three elegant suits held in reserve. As if taking a dose of bitter medicine, she would turn away and dress herself with studious simplicity, although taking care to avoid an eccentric or old-fashioned appearance.

In accordance with her niece's plans, a little



dexterity on Aunt Winifred's part revealed her own standing and circumstances, two known factors needed to insure Bentie *any* attention in her disguise.

One bright morning Claribel went to pay a call at the room adjoining her own, to visit a lady and her daughter who were assiduously cultivating Mrs. Rutherford's acquaintance. They accordingly showed Claribel considerable patronizing attention.

"What do you think of the Meridans?" asked Mrs. Jones, in the midst of some gossiping conversation. "You know that they have position and are wealthy"—the latter sentence spoken impressively as she saw Claribel hesitate a minute.

Mrs. Jones was sitting up in bed preparatory to taking a homeopathic dose which Maria, her daughter, was in the act of administering. There was the spoon extended, but mother and daughter sat with eyes directed to the slender, erect girl sitting on the foot of the bed.

"What do I think of them?" The brown-gray eyes dilated slightly, the firm but gentle mouth had just the glimmer of a twinkle round its corners, as Claribel responded: "I



think Mrs. Meridan a very proper lady indeed, as, of course, she ought to be, the mother of such a large family and having an example to set. Mr. Meridan is agreeable."

"Proper! Agreeable! They are splendid! And the children, the young ladies?" continued Mrs. Jones inquisitively.

"O, they are rude!"

Maria elevated her scanty eyebrows, and Mrs. Jones looked amazed. "A Meridan rude!" her not unkindly blue eyes exclaimed, and Maria said, almost breathlessly, "What do you mean?"

"Only that they had not known me a day, and *Claribelled* me. And when I asked what a jib was, Miss Emma exclaimed, 'What a loon you are!' Then they finger my clothing and jewelry, and offer advice, and borrow, and all that sort of thing, as if we were the oldest acquaintances."

Claribel found herself beginning to talk a little excitedly, and stopped suddenly.

"O!" said Maria, in a prolonged and relieved tone; "they will get over that—must—they hold such a position and are so very wealthy; hardly more than children yet, either."



“Well,” said Claribel very determinedly; “Miss Emma is eighteen, and ought to show symptoms of ladyhood. I have failed to see any.”

“Miss Elton, I think you are mistaken,” said Mrs. Jones, sharply. “She is the most perfectly self-possessed creature of her age I ever saw, and really manages gentlemen charmingly. Quite a little coquette.”

“Coquetry is a feminine instinct; Dr. Holland says so,” said Maria a little peevishly, and with a furtive, would-be-bewitching expression at their young visitor. Maria was receiving attention from a gentleman of standing, and in consequence reading Timothy Titcomb’s letters, with what practical results her quotation shows.

“I do not think he had a Miss Meridan in mind when he wrote the passage,” said Claribel, her eyes flashing. “In Dr. Holland’s estimation it is character, and not wealth, or position, or coquetry, that makes a lady truly polite. Emma Meridan has about as much character as the jelly-fish we sail through when we are on the water.”

Claribel bit her lips; she was talking angrily. She dared not remain, and so, rising and tell-



ing Mrs. Jones that she hoped she would soon be well—Mrs. Jones was a watering-place invalid—she left the room and went out on the wide, high piazza that overlooked a broad but almost land-locked ocean bay.

The wind blew fresh, and as she walked up and down the excited color in her cheeks deepened, but her frank gray eyes grew once more kind and soft.

After all it was just what she had come to Stapleton Bay for, to study character while she was resting. She had Aunt Winifred when she became disgusted. It was wonderful, the dexterous gossiping manner in which one lady had given another to understand that Miss Elton worked and had been given a vacation by her employer. That had been enough to ostracize our little friend with the Meridan family and a score of others. The married ladies patronized the “rather nice-looking creature,” but secretly wondered how so aristocratic a lady as Mrs. Rutherford could burden her summer with the care of a “shop-girl.” For gossip, without a particle of hesitation, decided that Bentie could be nothing else and at Stapleton should be nothing else. The old gentlemen thought her interesting and natural ;



the young gentlemen, as a whole, thought nothing at all.

So it happened that, during a whole week, she had had an exceedingly restful time, and, rather too sharply for a sentimental forgiveness of the coldness and neglect bestowed upon her, had realized that just a little of all the attention that had been lavished upon her from babyhood up had been paid for as it was given, or, that it was reaping an immense prospective interest. Up and down she walked, reasoning herself out of her anger, and tempering it into an honest indignation over the position which, she could not help feeling, was in a sense forced upon her. But on the bright day on which she had held the conversation we have narrated, the fever-sore had disappeared, the pale cheeks were ruddy with excitement and exercise, the gray eyes were dancing to the spring of her step, and the bonny auburn hair was all in a quiver under the clear sunshine and the gay breeze. It floated and curled in a way that Dolly Varden might have envied.

Perhaps Miss Emma Meridan did envy the shop-girl, for as she came around the side of the house and approached Bentie, an involun-



tary admiration shone out from her deep blue eyes.

Miss Meridan lisped. She had red hair. Her eyes were very blue. Her complexion was very fresh. Her forehead and hands were much freckled. Her nose had a flat, pressed look, as if she had leaned her life-time "with her face against the pane." But her "make-up" was stylish and expensive. She wore diamond ear-rings always, and other things accordingly, and she had position and was wealthy.

"Claribel, Mitheth Rutherford thayth you are tho merry and jolly. I have waited for a week to thee it, and fear I mutht be dithappointed."

"I require a kindred spirit," gayly replied Claribel, as she passed on.

Miss Meridan looked after her in sheer astonishment, and then, sauntering down the piazza to a group of ladies busy with their embroidery and conversation, just in front of Mrs. Rutherford's window, said, glancing back disdainfully at Claribel, who had paused, her head erect, her hair blowing, and her eyes fixed on the bay:

"That girl ith tho athuming! I declare, it



takth all the love I feel for dear Mitheth Rutherford to treat her dethently. It ith tho evident that the hath never had any advantageth."

A fat, ordinary looking dame, resplendent in jewelry, and having on a lace cap profusely decorated with pink ribbons, dropped her tating for an instant, and, looking contemplatively at Emma, said:

"Never mind, my dear; it will not do for the ladies to be unkind. The gentlemen understand how to give such a person her position. She has no attention."

"Dear me, no!" and Emma laughed and tossed her head. "The that like a thtick in the boat the other night, only now and then making a remark that jutht made me thtare. I can do that, you know, occathionally."

"I've no doubt she feels the difference, although she says nothing," remarked Mrs. Meridan. "I have been a little tried, though, in having my younger children, just when their habits are forming, brought on an apparently equal footing with a person of no social culture. Europe is the only place, after all, if you wish to keep your children excluded from all but their equals."



“Frank Middleton thaid to me yethterday, ‘Who ith that girl with the gray eyeth and fine figure?’ You thould have heard George Hale dethcribe her firht appearanth at Thta-pleton to him, and her attempth at what the evidently conthideth learned converthathion. The thith out on the piatha, morningth, reading the paperth and thothe dry looking magathineth that papa doeth, ath if the were really interethted. All put on, I know!” and Emma shrugged her shoulders.

Just then Frank Middleton joined the party, and Emma, turning archly, said, “I wath telling them how Mithter Hale thattered your romantheth about Mith”—pointing to Clari-bel in the distance.

“They are not shattered by any means. I have been on a voyage of discovery since, and I can assure you, Miss Elton is the most witty and intelligent young lady I have met this summer.”

“You outrageouth man!” And Emma uttered a mock scream.

“How uncomplimentary!” exclaimed the fat lady, with as much voice as her rotundity would allow.

“If she *is* a shop-girl, she is a lady. I sup-



pose," and Mr. Middleton looked a little sarcastic, "that it is not impossible for a woman to employ her brain or her hands either, and still have the essentials of a true lady."

"O, no," replied Miss Meridan slowly, not liking to contradict, for she had a great admiration for Mr. Middleton, and a greater one still for his fortune. "But women should work at home. I think it is too shocking to be exposed to the world as girls like Mith Elton are. The influential are too unrefining."

"That depends—" And Mr. Middleton, looking in Claribel's direction, turned his steps that way, and presently, to Miss Meridan's chagrin, started with her for the bay, where he found it not unendurable to spend the whole morning with his companion, who was our Bentie, under the genial influences of respect and admiration.

She went to Aunt Winifred that night, and, laying her head in her lap while shedding a few quiet tears, said sweetly:

"It is the hardest but it is the loveliest lesson I have learned yet, auntie. I know that I shall hereafter see the faces and the souls of girls before I do their riches or position. But it is



cruel," she added, with a flash of indignation. "It is difficult enough to bear just as an experiment. If it were for life I should have to pray all the time, I fear, to keep me reconciled."

"You have found one or two friends, if you are a shop-girl."

"I know I have, and I shall never forget them. But I have found also a hundred cold and silent rebuffs, which make me feel ten years older. Do you know, I came just as near telling that sweet Mrs. Merwin, when she was trying to comfort me without appearing to do so, all about it. But I thought I would wait."

The next evening there was to be a grand sailing party.

The moon rose silver and mellow as a dream of fairy land, and the water was like a transparent mirror as it rippled under the gentle breeze blowing from the west. There were gayety, singing, repartee, and choruses, as a brown and jolly tar guided the sail-boat, filled with young people, out to a point where they could have an unobstructed view of the ocean.

There were many exclamations over the beauty and the grandeur of the scene, all manner of laughable invocations to the mighty deep, and then, at some one's suggestion, Miss



Meridan, who had a fine and well-trained voice, was asked to sing "Three Fishers." There never was any ring of sympathy in what she said or sang, but the notes rolled out with that peculiar mellowness always produced by music on the water, and, when she concluded, all were very warm in praises.

"Now let us have a recitation;" and Mr. Middleton looked at Bentie.

The indefinable prejudice against her among the young ladies, all growing out of her position, was marked this evening. She felt it with a defiance that set every nerve in a quiver.

There was not much seconding of the invitation, but Mr. Middleton, not to be baffled, entreated so warmly, that Bentie finally decided to assert herself.

Rising in the boat and facing the jolly old sailor, who was under the shadow of the sail—she was such a skilled oarswoman and had been so much on the water that the motion did not affect her—she grasped the mast with her firm white hand, and then glancing out upon the boundless, silvery expanse, began: "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!"



She had a rich, flexible, bell-like voice, and as, forgetting every thing but the stately majesty of the poem, she went on under an increasing inspiration, a feeling took possession of the wealthy but thoughtless girls at her feet, that either she had culture or a peculiar gift bestowed only by God. Genuine admiration took the place of their ignoble pride and exclusiveness, and when Bentie had concluded there was a general petition for more. But courage left her with the heartfelt encomiums pouring in upon her, and instead of expanding under the genial flow of praise, she all at once surprised herself, and the rest, too, by a suppressed but full sob that would not be controlled.

Then to the girls, whose goodness and usefulness had heretofore been largely theoretic, it occurred that it would be a praiseworthy act to bestow sympathy upon the young woman under Mrs. Rutherford's care.

But experience, in order to give sympathy aright, is as necessary as it is in other cases.

Those weak tears! as she called them to Aunt Winifred. And now that there was wholesale sympathetic yet patronizing offer of friendship, she withdrew quite into herself. "I feel



just like a charity-fair," she exclaimed bitterly, as her aunt expostulated with her, telling her to drink the cup bravely to the dregs.

The next morning, however, always found her ready for a new effort.

She developed so many strong, sweet traits under the temptation, and was so careful in never once betraying her identity, that her aunt loved her with more tenderness, if that were possible, than she ever had before. She now felt sure that Bentie had a strong foundation of firmness and principle under the outward gentleness and pliability of her demeanor.

One evening, a fortnight after their arrival, and when they had lost all fear of having their secret discovered, they formed a part of a large group collected on the western piazza.

Miss Emma Meridan was carrying on a merry dialogue with a half dozen incipient gentlemen with shadowy moustaches and side-whiskers.

Bentie stood just far enough removed to involuntarily hear all and yet not form one of the party. Her simple white dress and blue ribbons looked plain beside the silks and laces and rich jewels of the other young girls who, though dressed elegantly, lacked, in most in-



stances, a sympathy in style in consonance with their years.

Mrs. Rutherford's quietly observant eye instituted a comparison, and she could not resist drawing conclusions favorable to her girl. Her skin was so pure, her cheeks and chin so round, her teeth so white, her carriage so majestic, and there was such an honest, wholesome air about her whole expression, that her aunt felt that she would not have her changed in any respect.

While "Claribel" stood there so gently, overhearing all that was said, the stages drove up, depositing a merry party, if one could judge by the laughter that rung out on the still air.

Miss Emma and her set paused in their conversation as the new arrivals made their appearance on the veranda, and then indulged in the comments usual at such times.

They were a stylish, aristocratic-looking company, and among them—valuable acquisitions at a watering-place—were four young gentlemen. One of them, with the lady on his arm, suddenly recognized a familiar face among the group, and hastened forward to greet her.



Bentie's eyes dilated, and the rich crimson flooded her cheeks. Springing forward, both hands extended, she clasped those of the young lady, who exclaimed:

"Bentie Claribel Elton Winthrop! how did you happen here?"

The secret was out.

THE END.



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